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The Four Circles
of
Hollow Water

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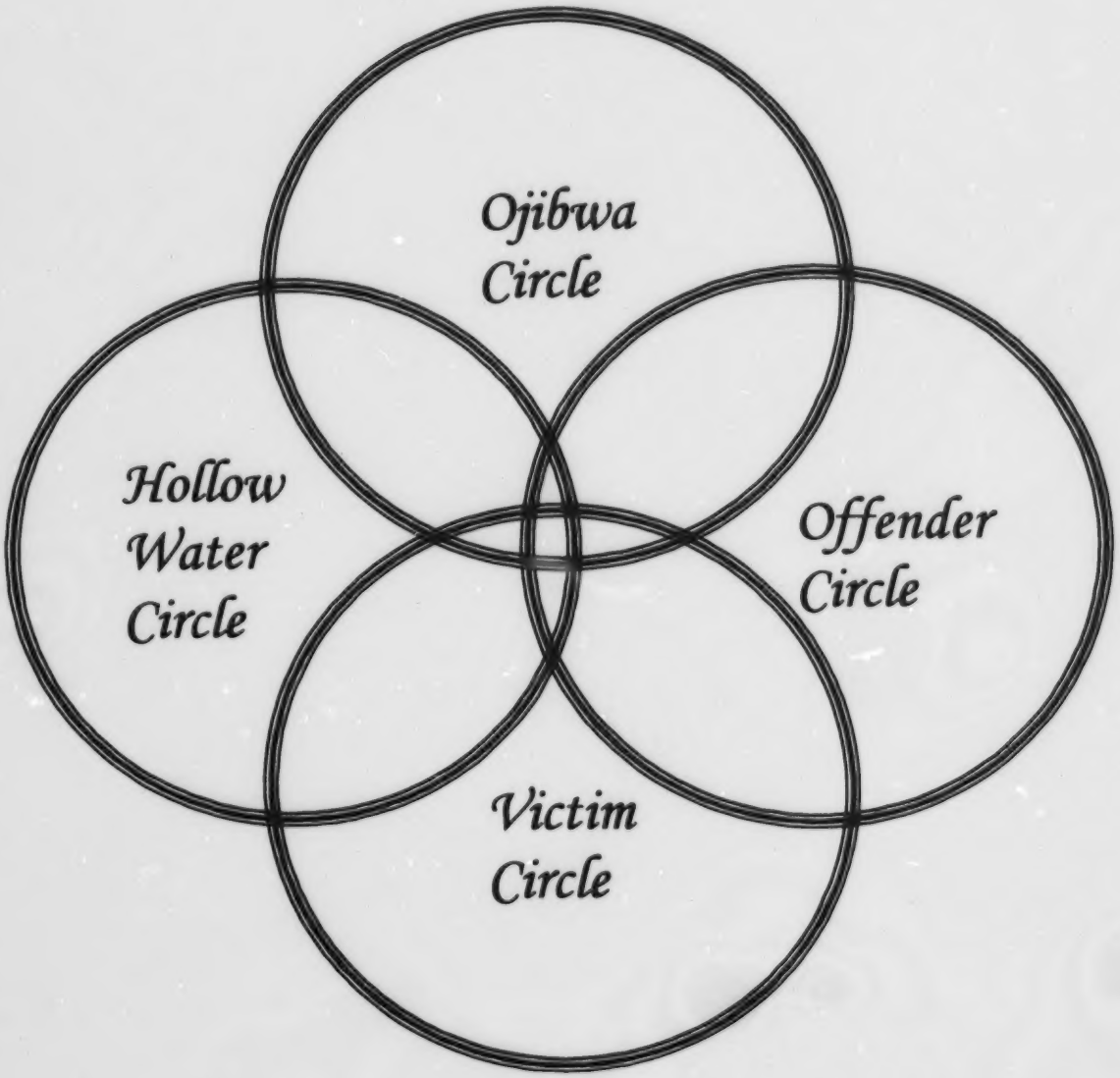
The Four Circles of Hollow Water



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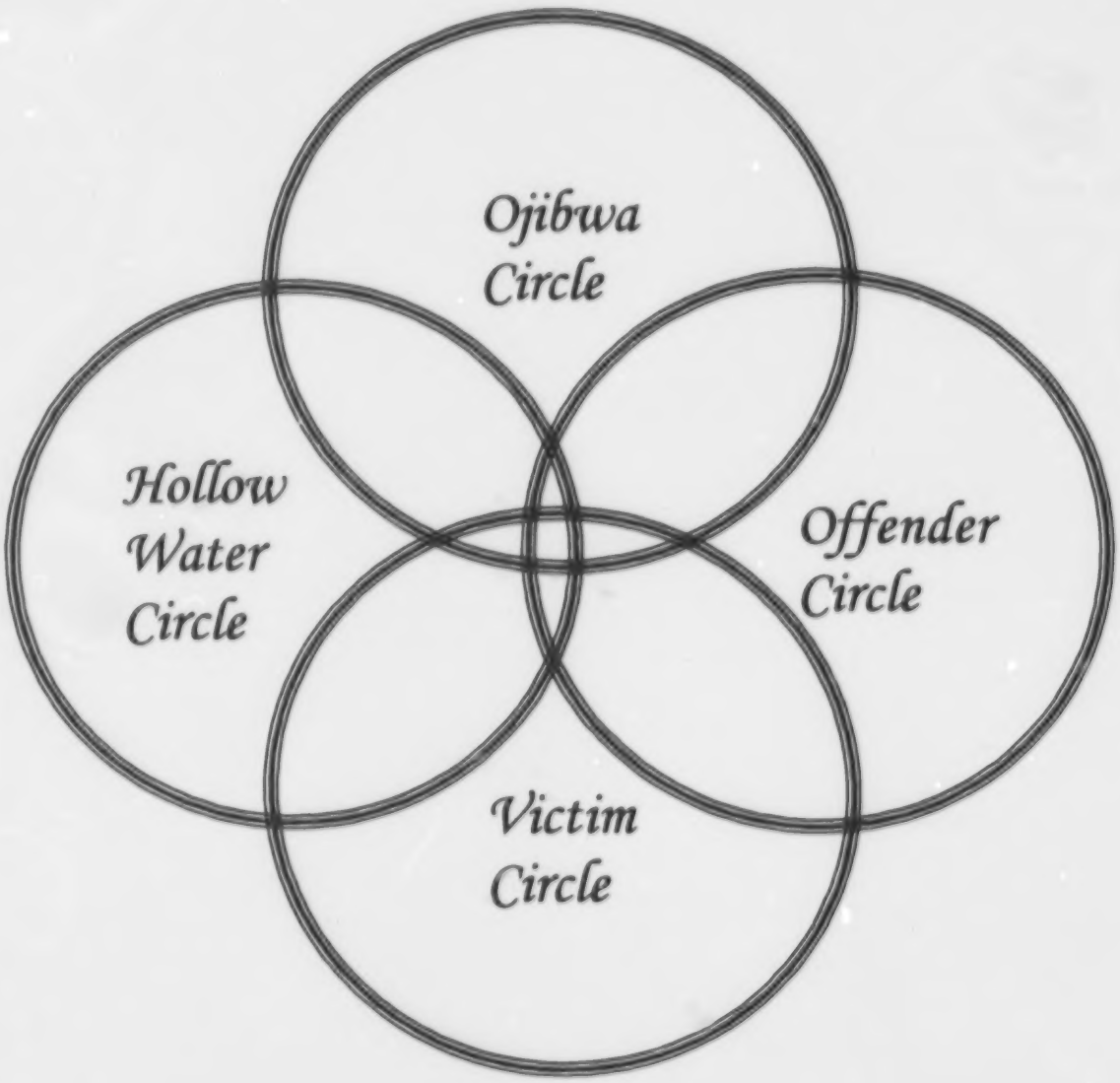
The Four Circles of Hollow Water



We hunger for heroes, for icons who can mobilize public energy, act as beacons, and show us just how good we are or how much we can achieve as human beings. It seems, however, that we can only grasp one or two heroes at a time. We have only to watch the Olympic games and what precedes them to see this happen. There are always one or two individuals or teams who seize public attention and are placed on the lofty pedestal of adoration.

If the public's expectations are met, the hero is adored. If not, the fall from grace is rapid and resounding. The individual has disappointed the crowd. Public blame for a poor performance is placed on his or her shoulders, forgetting all past achievements or future potential. Never mind that he or she has "had a bad day" but is still one of the best. Somehow the public has been denied its hero.

Aboriginal people are looking for heroes — something, or someone to show that they have done them proud, so the world at large will see that they, too, have the best.

Over the past few years, the small community of Hollow Water has become one such icon for Aboriginal people. It has begun to heal itself from a degree of unhealthiness that is all too familiar to Aboriginal people in Canada. While others are moving towards healing, Hollow Water is seen by many, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, as succeeding.

But is Hollow Water as unique as some are making it out to be? Are they being placed on a pedestal by Aboriginal people, governments, and other Canadians? If so, is Hollow Water being placed under a microscope of public attention that no community could hope to survive? When the inevitable cracks in the public's perception of their perfection become evident, will they fall from grace while the public searches for another hero, another icon, to replace it?

The purpose of this collection is to explore the Hollow Water experience; to see the community in the context of its culture and of Canadian society as a whole; to hear what others have to say about them, and what they have to say about themselves.

Nothing happens in isolation. All beings are connected to all other beings, to what will come and to what went before. To understand what is happening in Hollow Water one must understand the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional — the cultural — context of it. That is what the Ojibwa

Circle does. If offers insight into a world view which is so very different from that of the larger society that it is puzzling, if not totally confusing, to the members of that larger society who come in contact with it.

The Ojibwa Circle notes that sex was both recognized and integrated into an Ojibwa child's healthy upbringing. It is also clear that certain acts were consistently viewed as unacceptable and those who contravened met with swift and harsh sanctions.

In its discussion of *p'madziwin,* this section shows the Ojibwa people as having distinct views on what a healthy, balanced life was. The section talks about how contact with and colonization by Europeans upset the balance of First Nations across Canada, and no less the Ojibwa people who came to be known as Hollow Water First Nation.

That the people of Hollow Water have been able to draw from their culture to begin to heal the unhealthiest in their community says much for their strength and endurance in conditions that would have tested the mightiest of us. The Ojibwa Circle sheds light on where that strength has come from.

Hollow Water's healing process is frequently cited as unique. Often this isolates it from the larger body of work on sex offender treatment that is being done in non-Aboriginal communities. For that reason, we have included the Offender Circle by Marshall and Fernandez. This collection gives the reader an understanding of "state-of-the-art" treatment for non-Aboriginal sex offenders.

The Offender Circle discusses the characteristics of sex offenders, their assessment, and treatment using cognitive behavioural therapy. Marshall and Fernandez conclude this discussion by focusing on the application of the generally accepted method of sex offender treatment to Aboriginal offenders.

When you read the Offender Circle together with the Hollow Water Circle, you will observe that Hollow Water's healing process is not unique. There are, in fact, common threads between state of the art mainstream offender treatment and that offered to sex offenders in Hollow Water.

Cognitive behavioral treatment concentrates on the combined influence of many economic, social, political, behavioral, and psychological factors. Most current programs target a range of critical issues such as improving social skills, self-

esteem, and confidence, as well as enhancing appropriate sexual interests, dealing with lack of communications skills, substance abuse, inadequate life skills, and limited anger control. It is recognized that the offender's own history as a victim of abuse must be addressed. Taken together, cognitive behavior therapy attempts to deal with the offender's issues in a holistic manner. This is really no different than the approach taken by Hollow Water.

Practitioners of mainstream sex offender treatment now realize that a confrontational approach to therapy does not produce the desired results. Therapists need to adopt empathetic and respectful approaches to clients and make it clear to offenders that they, as a whole, are accepted and it is their harmful behavior that is not. Again, this seems little different than the philosophy adopted by the Hollow Water healing process.

There are some obvious differences between the clinical approach described in the Offender Circle and the community-based approach developed in Hollow Water. The non-Aboriginal response to sexual abuse is to treat offenders and victims separately, largely neglecting reintegration with the community. While offenders treated in a clinical setting are given empathy training and attempt to understand the impact of their assaults on their victim's feelings and behavior, no direct contact is made. According to Hollow Water healers, this does not allow for closure by the victim, the offender, or the community. As part of a clinical treatment approach, offenders are taught relapse prevention techniques that can be self-managed. This is a far cry from the on-going support victimizers in Hollow Water receive through regular circles and contact with workers.

Marshall and Fernandez acknowledge two Aboriginal sex offender treatment programs which cover, in most respects, what is considered "state-of-the-art" treatment for non-Aboriginal offenders. These are the sex offender program offered by Native Clan Organization in Winnipeg and Hollow Water's Community Holistic Circle Healing process.

One way of looking at a program's "success" is to examine the effectiveness of changing offender behavior by looking at their potential to sexually offend again. On average, the sexual offense recidivism rate is low. A 1996 study undertaken by Corrections Research in the Policy Branch of Solicitor General Canada looked at data from 28,972 sexual offenders and found that after four to five years, 13.4% recidivated with a sexual offense. There were, however, differences in the recidivism rates for different types of sexual offenders. Rapists were slightly more likely to recidivate sexually (19%) than were child

molesters (13%). Among child molesters, the recidivism rate for incest offenders was lower still (4%).

Community Holistic Circle Healing in Hollow Water has taken 48 offenders into their healing process. To date, none have completed the full healing process and only 2 have been charged with subsequent sexual offenses. For a process that is still evolving and growing, Hollow Water can stand with any other treatment program available anywhere.

In many ways you may find the Victim Circle the most difficult to read. The pain of the people who are its subject matter is almost palpable. Such pain knows no boundaries. Neither gender, nor culture, limit it. It is nourished by its denial. And it is a fact of life in Hollow Water, as it is in Canada.

How individuals are victimized by sexual abuse and how they react to this victimization are discussed, as is the impact of the victimization on the community. What is clear is that sexual abuse does not happen in isolation and it always leaves more than one victim. Dealing with it is often a battle that must be waged on more fronts than can be easily counted.

What Community Holistic Circle Healing does — facing sexual abuse head on — is the hardest part of all. By comparison, repressing and forgetting are easy. Healing must take place under the steady gaze of the traumatic reality of sexual abuse. That this task is formidable is softened only by the fact that it takes place in a community that refuses to give up on any of its members no matter how deeply they have been wounded, nor how despicable their acts.

In the final section of this collection Hollow Water speaks. The components are transcripts of conversations which took place between 1994 and 1996. The transcripts have been gently edited to reflect the true flow of the words which came from the hearts of their speakers.

Many of the words come from the heart of Berma Bushie who has been involved with Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH) since its inception. A survivor of sexual abuse, she offers a unique perspective on this exceptional community. Her openness in discussing what happens in her community is not only informative but refreshing in a world which continues to uphold the silence around sexual abuse. Berma's words and her approach to life are grounded in what she is as a mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical member of the Anishnabe people. Through her words you will understand what has been

written in the sections which precede it — that this fundamentally different approach to sexual abuse comes from the intrinsically disparate world view of her people.

The people of Hollow Water do not believe in incarceration. They believe that incarceration means that offenders can hide from, rather than face, their responsibilities for the pain they have caused. The difference in Hollow Water is that offenders face their responsibilities with the love, respect, and support which the Anishnabe people believe are due to all creatures.

It is the hope of the people who work in CHCH that they can share what they have learned with other First Nations, however, they acknowledge that not even all the people who live in Hollow Water would commend their work.

Hollow Water is a small community. Victims cannot hide from victimizers. Their day-to-day routines are such that their lives are in regular contact with those of their victimizers. The CHCH process means that they do not have to live those lives in fear.

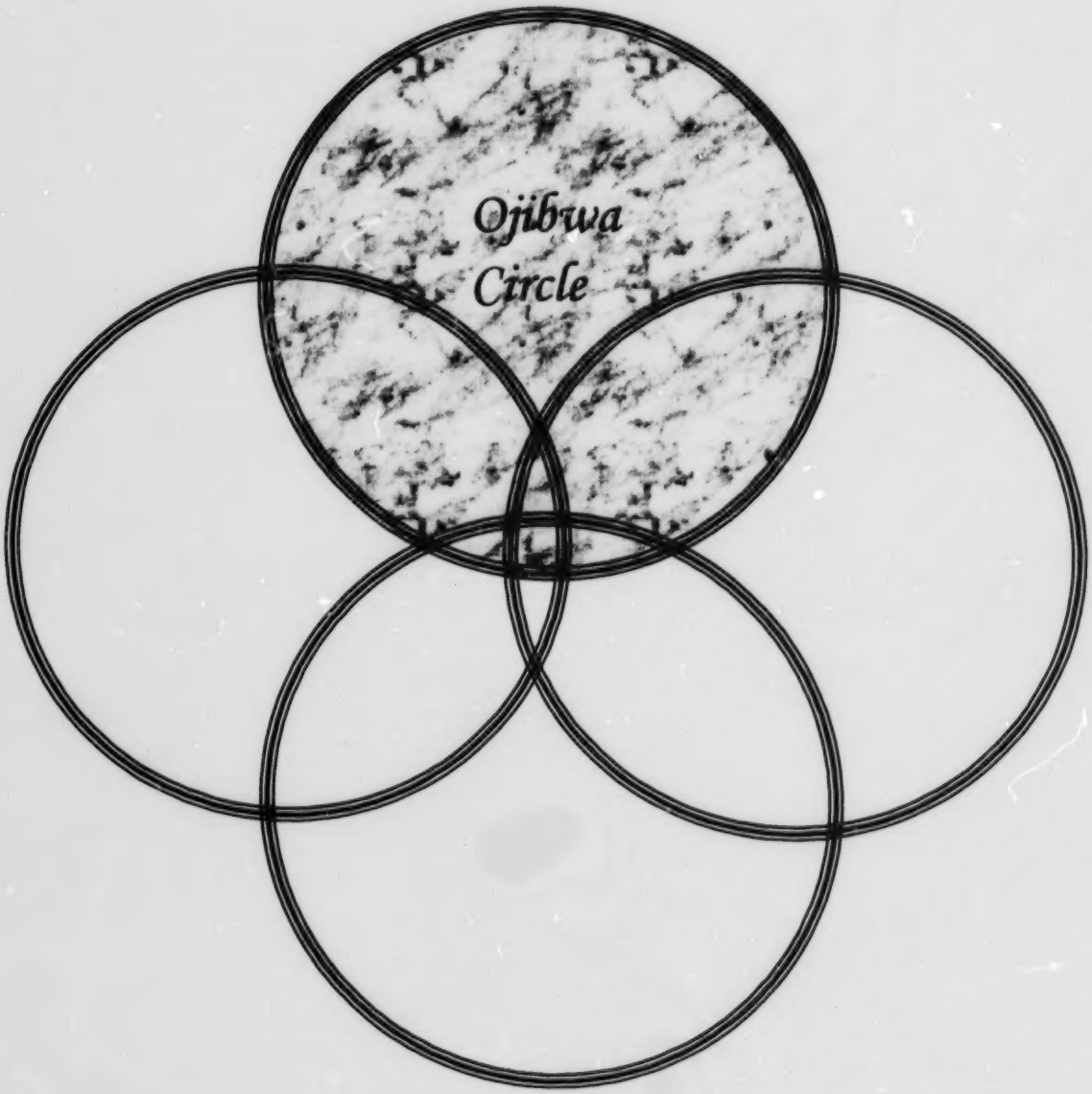
This collection was assembled to answer some of the many questions which we try to respond to daily — questions like: what do First Nations really want? why doesn't the Canadian justice system work for Aboriginal people? what is that place, Hollow Water, all about? That such questions are being asked indicates both how far we have come and how far we have to go.

The people of Hollow Water are unique in many ways, and in many ways their views are shared by First Nations across this land. In 1991, at a conference on Aboriginal justice held in Whitehorse, Chief David Keenan of the Teslin Tlingit people said, "there is no such thing as a dispensable person anywhere in this country. We must quit treating them as such." That is what the people of Hollow Water are saying. They are saying that in a world of disposable cups, disposable razors, and disposable diapers, their people are not disposable. They are saying that while the snowmobiles and rubber boots and computers of Canadian society may work for them, the justice system does not.

If this collection answers many of your questions about Community Holistic Circle Healing in Hollow Water, then it will have achieved its purpose. If it leaves you with still more questions, then it will be an honest reflection of the fit between Aboriginal people and the Canadian justice system.

This collection has one further purpose and that is to honour the First Nations across this country who have refused to deny their culture, no matter what their state of health. Theirs is truly a triumph of the human spirit.

Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit
March 1997


Ojibwa
Circle

The Ojibwa Circle: Tradition and Change
by Christine Sivell-Ferri

Part One: Tradition

LOOKING OUT: WORLDVIEW

> Worldview: the way the world looks to the people looking out.
> *A. I. Hallowell, 1955*

> The world is vast and mysterious; to think otherwise is foolish.
> *A Yaki Way of Knowledge*

Culture is not truth; it is a people's best approximation of the true nature of the cosmos. Language articulates culture. *W'daeb-awae'* is Ojibwa[1] taken to mean, "s/he is right, correct, accurate, truthful."[2] The expression approximates the word for truth in the English language but the expression does more than confirm the speaker's veracity. It is at the same time a philosophical proposition. The phrase conveys that one casts one's words and one's voice only as far as vocabulary and perception will enable and as accurately as one can describe it, given one's command of language and the limitations of language.[3] Assigned to a speaker, it confirmed credibility at the time yet allowed for later reassessment and a change of vision without the assigning of fault if the situation changed. Consider that a culture perceiving truth in this way is credible, open; not fixed and rigid.

CREATION

"Kitche-Manitou was God, the Great and Foremost mystery of the supernatural and natural orders. It was taken for granted and accepted as true that Kitche-

---

[1] Ojibwa is a European name for the people which has, over the centuries, come into common usage. Anishnabeg is the people's name for themselves and translates as "the Good People". Anishnabe is singular.

[2] Basil Johnston, "One Generation from Extinction", Native Writers Canadian Writing, Vancouver, University of B.C. Press; 1990. p. 12

[3] Loc. cit.

Manitou created the universe, the world and the beings upon, above and below, both corporeal[4] and incorporeal, from a vision or a dream."[5]

Creation brought physical reality out of transcendent vision in an act of unpretentious generosity. Creation was the Creator's gift, a sharing.

> Out of nothing he made rock, water, fire and wind. Into each one he breathed the breath of life. On each he bestowed with his breath a different essence and nature. Each substance had its own power which became its soul-spirit.
>
> From these four substances Kitche Manitou created the physical world of sun, stars, moon and earth.
>
> To the sun Kitche Manitou gave the powers of light and heat. To the earth he gave growth and healing; to waters purity and renewal; to the wind music and the breath of life itself. ...
>
> Then Kitche Manitou made the plant beings. These were four kinds: flowers, grasses, trees, and vegetables. To each he gave a spirit of life, growth, healing, and beauty. Each he placed where it would be the most beneficial, and lend to earth the greatest beauty and harmony and order.
>
> After plants, Kitche Manitou created animal beings conferring on each special powers and natures. There were two-leggeds, four-leggeds, winged and swimmers.[6]

Into this beauty and mystery came human beings — the last created by Kitche Manitou and the most dependent. All other forms of life energy could exist

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[4] Corporeal life means those forms of life belonging to the physical world; incorporeal refers to the non-physical or spirit world.

[5] Basil Johnston in the foreword to Dancing with a Ghost in Rupert Ross' *Dancing with a Ghost*, Markam, Ontario, Octopus Pub. Group, 1992, p. x

[6] Basil Johnston, Ojibway Heritage, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1976, p. 12-13

without the intervention or presence of the human species; within the interdependencies of life people had endless needs from the other living beings for sustenance and survival.

The Creator's weaving of human-persons into the world "does not follow a revolutionary path where man is given dominion over the other animals and a categorical superiority in some kind of vertical hierarchy."[7] Instead a human is only one kind of person in a world populated by many kinds of persons. In the world of persons, a human derives status on the basis of particular needs and competencies, apparently very much in the same way as the animal, plant, spirit persons have done. There are many competencies that humans simply cannot attain: Bear copes with winter through hibernation, while humans must face the cold and keep on hunting. It is doubtful that Bear ever starves to death, and he is stronger than a human. The human who moves on snowshoes appreciates the mobility of geese who cope with winter by migration. Everywhere the other persons show the human's lack of supremacy in any absolute sense.[8] Humans, while certainly distinct from other forms of life, nonetheless reside within the same sphere of existence as non-human, animal-persons and all the other non-human corporeal life.

Human-persons and animal-persons experience life not only in relation to each other and all other living things but also in relation to the Guardian or Attending Spirits.

P'MADAZIWIN[9]

Relationships with the spirit world and spirit beings on the earth are essential. "The central value of Ojibwa culture was expressed by the term *p'madaziwin*, life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of health, longevity, and well-being, not only for oneself but for one's family. The goal of living was a good life and the Good Life involved *p'madaziwin*. "[10]

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7 Dick Preston, "Address to the Third Conference on Algonquin Studies", Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Aug. 29-30, 1970, p. 2-3

8 Loc. cit.

9 Because traditionally Ojibwa was an oral language with regional variations, spellings and pronunciations vary from interpreter to interpreter and place to place. The spelling used by the anthropologist A. I. Hallowell in the 1930s was *pimadazimin*. Fred Wheatley, Ojibwa language instructor, Trent University 1974-1982 (circa) used b'modziwin. This paper attempts to show western Ojibwa, or Saulteux, pronunciation and so uses *p'madaziwin*.

10 A.I. Hallowell, Culture and Experience, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955, p. 360

Achieving *p'madaziwin* was only possible for those whose comportment[11] was socially approved and who sought and obtained the help of spirit beings. This was especially important for men. Sought in solitude through fasting and overture, help could not be demanded because the spirit world would not be compelled. Rather, the Creator or other spirits, such as those responsible for the well-being of their animal wards, blessed the seeker out of pity and, in recognition of his dependent human nature, gave him their aid.[12] The seeking of *p'madziwin* lasted throughout life. In the same way the water levels of the rivers and lakes could rise and fall, *p'madziwin* could be more present in one's life at times and elusive at others. More could be gained through living a good life. It could be lessened, or lost, through bad actions or improper living.

The visionary fasting experience was sacred, never referred to lightly, and the responsibility rested with the individual to seek the full meaning and extent of the blessing. For a young man, in particular, it marked his transition from childhood and dependence upon older people for aid and sustenance to manhood where his own right relationships with the supernatural world were imperative for *p'madaziwin*. Upon these relationships depended in large measure his inner personal security — his power — and through them too, he had new awareness and respect for his obligations.

His success was tied to his comportment, his willingness to act correctly, use his powers skillfully, to be self-reliant and ready to bear hardship even starvation, with equanimity. Destructive attitudes expressed through wanton killing, greed, the torture or showing of disrespect to any of the animal-persons would result in his wrong relationship with the supernaturals who directed the animals to him. The animals, through their respective guardian spirits, would cease to offer themselves to him. He and his family could starve or be stricken with *onichine* (illness through offense) as a result of his foolish behaviour.

Some Aboriginal people now interpret cosmology as giving them a special status in their interactions with animals independent of the animal-persons' respective spiritual guardians who are responsible for those animals. This interpretation ignores the full cosmological view: human and animal are on the same plane and, independent of each other, have a direct and important relationship with the spirit world. Western thought, on the other hand, views the animals as lesser

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[11] comportment refers to the way one conducts oneself.

[12] Hallowell, Culture and Experience, p. 360

beings which are killed by human skill and technology only. For western society there is no guardian spirit concept nor does animal reality and animal destiny involve the same capacity as that of humans.

Traditionally, the Ojibwa related to the world in its complexity from within the web of interdependencies comprising it. For the Ojibwa, it was not the authoritative power of the state that united and defined them as a people; Ojibwa cohesion was more a matter of permitting individuals seeking a common central value, *p'madaziwin*, to achieve it without too much coercive human interference. [13]

Conscience was highly internalized. As individuals the Ojibwa sought power and support from the spirit world, and as individuals each bore the full brunt of responsibility for his or her own acts. Accountability was ultimately to the powers beyond human control and thus the consequences of wrong behaviour could not be evaded. "Departure from approved behaviour, especially in the sexual sphere, provoked its own penalty automatically — disease or sometimes death — that is, withdrawal of *p'madaziwin*."[14] Misfortune, disease and death as punishments were meted out in this world.

It follows that in those long ago days, there were no hereditary or institutionalized leaders nor were there any organized penal sanctions. Sanctions were, for the most part, fluid and based on an individual's circumstances. Only in the most abhorrent situations, such as sorcery, were there proscribed sanctions.

As well as being affected by one's own wrong actions, the Good Life could be interfered with by others through sorcery. Shamans were greatly respected and the 'evil' ones feared. They could pit their powers against another whose only recourse then was to fight back in defence, also through supernatural means. This possibility, though frightening, was also a means of keeping the peace. Until a duel by sorcery began one could not know the extent of the other's power in relation to one's own.

Perhaps this indicates that everyone would be interested in the pursuit of shamanistic power but such was not the case. The spiritual path was long and arduous, involving much sacrifice with no guarantees. Furthermore, if the shaman proceeded down the tempting path of evil and began practicing 'bad medicine' s/he risked becoming a creature of the powers that made her/him. In the end defeat would come to the shaman using 'bad medicine' when his/her

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[13] Ibid. p. 361

[14] Ibid. p. 362

sorcery was turned to work against her/him or one s/he loved by the 'bad medicine' itself or by those to whom harm had been intended.

TRADITIONAL ROLES

INTRODUCTION

Certainly, there were traditional roles for men and women. These summaries are offered to provide background from which the reader can view contemporary gender roles and relationships. Perhaps insights can be gained. Readers are invited to consider these writings and to evaluate them in light of their own knowledge and experience and as stimulation for further reflection and learning.

In 1930 Ruth Landes a young doctoral student at an American University was introduced to, and spent several years recording the stories of, Mrs. Maggie Wilson of Emo in northwestern Ontario. Mrs. Wilson, then middle-aged, was of Cree descent, married for many years to an Ojibwa man and fluent in that language. Many of the stories within this section are from Mrs. Wilson as told to Landes. Her stories date back well into the 19th century when, even though contact with western culture took place, the contact was still minimal and had not yet affected traditional Ojibwa culture to the extent it would in later years. These stories, therefore, are probably very reflective of traditional culture and beliefs.

SKILLS AND OCCUPATIONS OF WOMEN

Excellent sources (listed in the bibliography) exist. These detail the traditional skills and occupations. This section focuses only on the roles of women and what constituted ideas of healthy sexuality. Women's occupations were described by authors of the early 20th century as 'quiet, sedentary and domestic'. Looking back at a people surviving in a natural environment, still harsh and demanding today, it is understood women's skills must have been very diverse and their tasks physically demanding, complex, and intricate. Independence, ingenuity and resourcefulness were required and valued.

ROLE RESTRICTIONS AND STATUS

The roles for men were more rigidly proscribed than for women.[15] Writings about Plains Cree society (e.g. Mandelbaum) indicate a place for a man who, through dream or vision or more conscious choice, follows the life of a woman. Such men would dress as women, take women's roles, and were respected for their skills. A comparable cultural role did not seem to exist among the Ojibwa, though many men did take on chores and tasks conventionally assumed by women, without self-consciousness or embarrassment, when absent for long periods on their hunting grounds or trap lines.

Some writers, for example Landes, clearly interpret the culture as valuing women less than men. She believes that women were not held in as high esteem as men and their work was deemed as far less exciting or even honourable than that of men. Others, like Basil Johnston, an Anishnabe from Cape Croker, Ontario focus more on the Ojibwa belief in the innate goodness designated to men and women and how this belief conferred on both sexes a sense of worth, equality and pride. These writers have very different views of traditional culture, however both suggest that more openness of roles were available to women.[16]

WOMEN'S ROLES

Women as bearers of culture

Language and culture are integrated today. For the traditional Ojibwa who had an oral culture, language was even more essential in conveying culture. Story tellers, orators, and language itself, were highly acclaimed. For both sexes, being regarded as a person worth listening to was a high distinction. By the same token, the worst epithet that could be imposed was to say *"w'geewi-animoh"*, meaning that s/he talks in circles, as a dog barks in all directions in uncertainty as to the source of some unknown disturbance."[17]

While the women worked they talked about their chores and imparted their skills, but talk was more than strictly related to the task at hand; it ranged everywhere from the number[18] and peculiarities of their husbands, to their children, reasons

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[15] Ruth Landes, Ojibwa Woman, 1969 edition, W.W. Norton Inc., N.Y., p. vi

[16] Loc. cit.

[17] Basil Johnston in the foreword to Dancing with a Ghost, p. xiii

[18] Polygyny — the practice of a man having more than one wife at the same time — was practiced among the Ojibwa. Only very successful hunters could afford such an arrangement. Another reason the situation occurred relatively infrequently was that the first wife might veto

for a case of adultery, objections to plural marriage, unconventional women, merits of individuals as tanners, beadworkers, midwives, merits of individual's work, sexual aberrations, illegitimacy, abortion, incest, suspected homosexuality, to the private motives behind interesting actions.[19] They talked a great deal, but women's hands were never still. It was this flow of talk, conscious and unconscious, that steeped children, and girls in particular, in their culture and taught them how to live in keeping with attainment of the 'Good Life'. In the presence of her older, predominantly female, relatives where "each woman was distinctive, where women's work was valued and women's values pursued"[20] girls watched and listened and learned. The practical, the theoretical, the nature of the world, all the accouterments pertinent to her life, including proper and improper behaviour and attitudes, were passed on within the extended family and by the extended family. The Ojibwa sense of community and all the interdependencies of life were reinforced.

Women as visionaries

Seeking and refining aid from the supernatural orders was less emphasized than for men and the formal vision quest of puberty was not part of what they needed to do. Visions came more spontaneously to girls and women. Answers to problems and help with trials of life such as orphanhood, neglect, or starvation could come without fasting and the specific seeking of a vision.

Contact with the spiritual dimension of life seemed more integrated, more easily revealed in dreams and more concerned with the practicalities of life than the acquisition/development of personal powers through contact with non-human spirits. To dream in the Ojibwa sense does not refer to the more ordinary dreams of the night, but to experiences during sleep or while awake that have a visionary quality.

> Following are some examples of the way in which non-human persons corresponded with women. Women 'dream' beadwork patterns, songs, decorations for a

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the arrangement by deserting, or threatening to desert, the polygynous husband or through overt hostility to the new wife. There are, however, stories describing virtually every possible ending to the scenario of husband arriving home with second wife. There is no doubt the first wife had plenty of say in the matter!

19 Landes, Ojibwa Woman, p. 18

20 Loc. cit.

dress, and complicated dance patterns.[21] Mrs. Wilson at the time of the First World War (1914-1918) dreamed an entire chorus and dance in support of the young men overseas. Dozens of people and many hours rehearsal were required to bring her dream into reality.

Part-Sky-Woman deeply mourned her father's death and was unreconciled to life without him. "One time when she was crying she heard someone speaking to her, saying, 'Do not cry as your days are to be long upon this island and I will give you something here with which you can have fun. See this.' She looked and the shadow of a cloud passed before her. ' This I will give you. Your body will be just like this cloud and sickness will not kill you.' It was the shadow of this cloud which had pity. And that was her dream. So then she made up her mind that she would not cry so much ... She commenced fishing again doing just as she used to see her father do ..."[22]

There are many stories about Part-Sky-Woman who was as light as, as swift as, as strong as the shadow-of-the-cloud spirit whose blessing she had received. Famous as a runner and athlete in all games, especially women's hockey she raced throughout the north-west. One summer she traveled with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) factor to Kenora to run against native and white men and women as in race after race they sought to defeat her. Wearing shorts and singlets her rivals ran only one race apiece; she ran again and again always winning by a wide margin. In her long double skirts, beaded moccasins 'fixed' by medicine, she would 'speak to the shadow of the clouds and right away feel her body light as a feather, and, as if she were running on air' sprint away running on and on to the finish line. After that she married an

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[21] Landes, p. 9

[22] Landes, p. 7

> Ojibwa man who having seen her race in Kenora, admired her very much.[23]
>
> Nine year old Sky-woman, whose father frightened and often beat her, ran away to escape him, and one day wandered so far into the bush that she became lost. She fell asleep and when she woke she did not realize that she had been gone four days. "All that time she dreamed that she was in a nice place where there were a lot of people and she was very happy and had nice things to eat. ... Here she was blessed so she could *nanandawi i we* (perform an important curing technique)." [24]

It appears here that the spirits gave her a gift in order to stop her father's abuse by making her a more respected and valued member of her family and community.

Sioux Woman's story tells of a woman's visionary power assisting her in a less conventional but no less pragmatic way. She sought safety for herself and her daughter and achieved it through the garnering of power against an adversary on her daughter's behalf.

> Sioux Woman, a young woman living with her mother, was threatened by a shaman when she refused his overtures that she would become *wintiko* and soon she did become sick and crazy. For twenty days she did not eat anything. Then her mother began to work to cure her, to stop her from becoming *wintiko*. The old woman kept on with her *manito kazo* (spiritual talk) and finally she beat that old shaman. He had sent that *wintiko* but it was he who then got sick and died. Then Sioux Woman got better. When this old man died,

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[23] Loc. cit.

[24] Ibid. p. 7. Sky Woman was very accomplished at nearly every skill and technique of the Ojibwa. As well, she was a visionary who 'dreamed' several times in her life and liked to live alone. Late in life, she married then, when she was widowed, returned to living alone. Aware of all influences about her, speculative, thoughtful, wise and resourceful, Sky Woman was the epitome of an unconventional woman and highly regarded by all.

> everybody was glad for he had destroyed a lot of people with his bad medicine. This old woman was the first to out-do him by her dreams and put an end to him. After her daughter got better her grandchildren all came home and they lived happily after that.[25]

This old woman did not become feared for her power as it was seen she was not seeking power but seeking only to aid her daughter and end the threat against them. She was highly respected.

Unconventional women

The Ojibwa had a profound respect for ability and individualism which prevented too rigid a sexual role defining. The Ojibwa ideal of womanhood did not include prowess at men's tasks of hunting and the seeking of personal power through vision quests and fasting. Yet, many women hunted and performed with great skill and success all the tasks conventionally a man's. The woman received no communal acknowledgment such as the feast of the first kill accorded to boys but her unconventional skills were esteemed and never derided. This esteem accrued especially if she were a widow or an older woman who had been married.

"[I]solation was pointed out as the one sphere in which men and women could show that they were as good, no worse than any other. To face and surmount similar challenges and tests alone, without aid, was the measure by which men and women judged others and loved to be judged."[26] Many women showed an aptitude for pursuits such as hunting or curing and there were women in all areas who hunted, went to war, or doctored as men did.[27] As a result of spontaneous vision, necessity, or personal inclination, women assumed roles which, though considered difficult and masculine, required no formal ceremony. From no one did a woman seek permission, nor was it expected she would.

Gossip and speculation about homosexual inclinations or activities did not occur even if she hadn't married. Women regarded homosexuals as unique. For men, a woman who qualified as a hunter was considered in that light, not as a queer girl who hunts. It was simply an additional role she adopted either temporarily or

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[25] Ibid. p. 195

[26] Basil Johnston in the foreword to Dancing with a Ghost, p. xi

[27] Ruth Landes, The Ojibwa Woman

throughout her life.[28] The following excerpts tell of some of the roles adopted by unconventional women.

> Half-Sky, a girl visionary, was her father's eldest and favourite daughter and his constant companion throughout her youth. She learned everything by watching him; her interest delighted him, so he taught her to set complicated traps and handle a gun.[29]

> Shee-ba had also learned a good deal from her father. After her mother's death she undertook to raise her little sister and taught her hunting in addition to women's work. In time the two girls had a lodge together and lived comfortably by hunting and fishing. The girls ceased hunting, however, after marriage to follow exclusively feminine work.[30]

In each of these situations the full story makes it clear there was an element of choice in the women's lifestyles. Widows had brothers and other relatives to help provide for them but preferred to keep to their own lodge. Often two widows lived alone with their children, supporting them with the aid of the elder daughter, as a father would. Frequently, women chose to support themselves in preference to marrying and as a matter of course adopted masculine techniques. "A woman can always marry therefore women who live alone probably enjoy this manner of life; they desire solitude or wish to hunt or trap or delight in complete self-reliance."[31]

MEN'S ROLES

To be an Ojibwa man was to hunt. The ever-present fear of starvation was a powerful cultural imperative propelling men but there was great mystique associated with hunting prowess.

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[28] Ibid. p. 137
[29] Ibid. p. 138
[30] Ibid. p. 139
[31] Ibid. p. 168-169

> A grown son who refuses to do his share is practically left to starve. A skillful wife may support her husband for a time if he is too lazy to hunt but after a time tolerance turns to scorn then shame and she will leave him.[32]

So important is hunting skill and good fortune predicated on a right relationship with the spirit persons that Mrs. Wilson tells of a young hunter and his wife struggling to a parent's encampment when pressed by dire hunger. The young woman is sheltered and fed and the young man rebuked and sent to make something of himself. Because it was his relationship with the game that was in trouble, it was the young man's responsibility to restore his hunting prowess. It was between him and his guardian spirits, the non-human spirit-persons. Success in hunting depended upon the animals giving themselves to him; if they had withdrawn their beneficence then the young man alone could work to restore the harmony. Supplication and reiteration of his pitiableness and dependence were needed.

From earliest infancy and the ritual naming feast, the emphasis on a man's life as hunter and seeker of the assistance of powers greater than himself was made clear. He was explicitly directed to seek the help of the spirit-persons particularly at the time of puberty. Landes, Hallowell, Rogers and others describe the vision quest the young man was expected to undertake. Landes stresses the preparation for this extended fast and personal quest that takes place throughout childhood as the child is encouraged to forego meals, to dream and to seek the spirits. From childhood self-reliance was fostered, self-control in all interpersonal relations expected, and development of the complex skills necessary for survival in a harsh land the hope of parents and community.

TRADITIONAL SEXUALITY

INTRODUCTION

Current ideas about sexuality are introduced as a point from which to consider traditional Ojibwa sexuality. Next, Mrs. Wilson's stories are used to illustrate healthy, traditional sexuality. The final section is comprised of stories and discussion of aberrant sexual behaviour and community reaction.

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[32] Ibid. p. 95

TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION OF SEXUALITY

Sexuality refers not only to people's perceptions about their bodies and genitals, but also to how they choose to express sexual energy and how and with whom they prefer to share sexual feelings. The phrase 'how a person feels about his or her body' clues us to the diffuse nature of human sexuality. As we are physical beings, so are we sexual beings; our sexuality lies in our physicality and is expressed through the physical medium of the body.

In sexual expression the person extends intimate self outward. Hidden aspects of self, genitals, and sensations are revealed to self and partner. If sexual expression takes place in a context both healthy and positive the experience is extremely satisfying. Good feelings about the body are reinforced as is the bond between physicality and sexuality. This intimacy and exchange of feelings with a partner can greatly enhance self-esteem.[33] Exactly what constitutes a positive, healthy forum for sexual expression varies with time and place and culture.

Conversely, sexual expression without full consent and awareness, or through force or incest damages self-esteem. Feelings of confusion, anxiety, guilt, isolation and dependency which may have some cultural degree of normalcy, especially for teenagers, are intensified for victims and victimizers.[34]

GROWTH OF A HEALTHY SEXUALITY

The Spirit Weeps makes clear that there are many myths surrounding sexual abuse. Here, stories and ethnography particular to the Ojibwa, further dispel the myth that incest is or was a cultural norm in some native societies. As well, these sections attempt to show how a healthy sexuality was imparted within traditional society. This work is a starting point, not the complete picture; reflection and seeking further for knowledge are important.

Childhood was a time of learning roles and expectations. Ojibwa children gained knowledge of their sexuality and proper conduct in the same way they acquired other requisite knowledge. Grandparents and grandchildren spent a great deal

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[33] W. Maltz & B. Holman, Incest and Sexuality, Lexington Books, Toronto, 1987, p. 8

[34] This relatedness of physical/sexual self explains why the negative feelings created by abuse are often acted out upon the body. Exactly what self-mutilation means varies from author to author but at its core slashing, or other self-injury, shows the relatedness, and exemplifies how damage to the sexual self is reflected in damage to the physical self.

of time together. The Elders held importance as nurturers and teachers for they had the necessary knowledge and wisdom coupled with the patience and generosity to instruct the children. Teachings were often imparted indirectly through the traditional tales and legends, but this form of instruction should not be construed as haphazard or careless.

> If the tales that have come down to us are to be examined, they will be found to be simple yet complex. They are simple in the sense that they appeal to the very young; complex in terms of the scope and depth and number of themes in each. There is another element to the stories besides that of diverse themes and understandings — humour. That stories are humourous reflects the skill of the story-teller and the element of comedy in all aspects of life and living. A story well told should have at least four levels of meaning: enjoyment, moral teaching, philosophic, and metaphysical.[35]

RELATIVES AND PROPER CONDUCT

In Ojibwa society different types of behaviour applied to distinct classes of kin. Kinship terms were used in a widely extended manner and not just as indicators of blood relations. Ojibwa kinship understandings were essential. They guided interpersonal relations, since customary attitudes and ways of relating are implied in the use of them. Two classes of kin, *cross-cousins,* and *avoidance relatives,* are the ones requiring explanation for this paper because important sexual roles and boundaries applied. A *cross-cousin* is of the opposite sex to oneself and is the child of father's sister or mother's brother. In some parts of Ojibwa territory *cross-cousins* were prospective spouses. Other specifics and subtleties as well as this kinship probably applied. Relationships among *cross-cousins* were full of fun, earthy jokes and broad flirtatiousness. These cousins enjoyed one another's company and, when seasonal gatherings permitted, spent a good deal of time together.

Avoidance relatives were all members of the opposite sex who were not prospective spouses or *cross-cousins*. Avoidance relationships were especially strict toward brother or sister, father-in-law or mother-in-law, cross-aunts (father's sister) and cross-uncles (mother's brother). Relationships, moderated by strict codes of conduct preventing free association and casual or bantering talk,

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[35] Basil Johnston, Ojibway Heritage, p. 70.

prevented these relatives from being alone together frequently or for prolonged periods.[36] Any sexual contact was clearly defined as incest and taboo.

Marriage was also prohibited between members of the same *clan*.

All dimensions of family life, including knowledge about these different types of relations, were part of the teaching children received and so sexuality developed in an integrated manner. It was understood the child grew as a physical and thus sexual being. As sexual interest grew, the culture provided modeling of appropriate flirtatious behaviour and banter. As well, awareness and understanding about correct sexual boundaries were imparted. Some insight into what constituted a healthy sexuality and how these ideals were passed on can be gleaned from the following sections.

THE 'LITTLE SWEETHEART'

The child's introduction to proper etiquette came easily through a playful idea known as the 'Little Sweetheart'. After a baby's birth, those around the mother took note of the first little non-human bit of life to come near and named it the Little Sweetheart. As one wee baby girl's cord was being cut a mouse ran past. "So we joked the baby and said she had a visitor come to flirt and sleep with her!"[37] In the same way a baby boy came to be "married" to a grasshopper. Relatives 'joked' the child this way through babyhood and the joke was taken up and echoed by the little ones too.

Through the joking the child came to know much about relationship terms and obligations and even about marital life. The Little Sweetheart was the spouse and other members of the sweetheart species the various categories of relatives. A child learned the conventional manner of flirtatiousness and broad joking towards potential spouses, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law and the class of relatives called *cross-cousins*.

Older members of the 'sweetheart' species were the father-in-law and mother-in-law, the cross-uncles (mother's brother) and the cross-aunts (father's sister) — the *avoidance relatives*. The restrictions of these *avoidance relationships* showed correct sexual boundaries and the light-hearted but accurate teachings

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[36] Implications for contemporary family counselling may still apply and should be considered. See The Spirit Weeps.

[37] Landes, p. 20

of the joking around the Little Sweetheart began the child's initiation in understanding them. Thus from an early age the child became aware of the respect to show these relatives and of how this respect deepens into the convention of avoidance of the parent-in-law of the opposite sex.

In this way, the culture provided subtly, and with humour, instruction from infancy about proper sexual boundaries and the correct forms of sexual expression. Anishnabe teaching fostered the integration and simultaneous development of a child's physical and sexual aspects of self. Joking and easy laughter conveyed the sense of pleasure and enjoyment associated with sexuality and the analogous examples of the 'sweetheart' species gave clear messages about sexual boundaries.

PLAYING 'HOUSE'

Playing 'house' was a children's game and occupation right through to puberty and included a child's version of all life's moments. There were battles with shamans and *wintikos* (though this type of play was forbidden), girls 'brewed' herbs for midwifery, sent their 'children' to fast, and impressed upon them their vocational skills.[38]

The boys were usually the hunters and brought home the 'game' to the girls. The children then broke off into 'household' and 'couples'. Supposedly they were careful of the marriage prohibitions as the boys took a spouse. Younger siblings made up the couple's 'children'. After the 'game' was prepared and cooked the 'adults' practiced marriage with their approximations of all the earthy banter and exchanges appropriate for spouses. It was accepted part of the game would be a good deal of sexual experimentation because that, too, was part of learning adult roles. Intercourse was forbidden, especially for a girl, but did take place "as long as nobody knew"[39].

The 'Little Sweetheart' and 'playing house' help us to see how Ojibwa people considered sexuality simply as further valued and respected traits comprising a whole person. The culture transmitted, naturally and in balance, ideas and attitudes toward sexual conduct and the joy of human sexuality.

SISTERS AND BROTHERS

In early childhood, brother and sister spent much time together in their games, gaining proficiency in the skills of their respective sexes. As they moved into

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[38] Ibid. p. 21

[39] Loc. cit.

middle childhood they spent more time with older relatives of their same sex and less with each other, but a bond remained.

Their relationship evolved during puberty for they were *avoidance relatives* in maturity. The girl's avoidance of her brother was one instance and the most emphatic one of the conventional avoidance existing between a person and all the relatives forbidden in marriage.[40] For a young woman, the onset of menstruation signaled the change in their relationship. If it were the boy who was older, his free and open relationship with his sister shifted when his changing voice signaled his own maturing. "They never speak to one another, as though they are shy."[41] When one sibling had married and had children they did talk together again but never so freely as during childhood. Sex references between them were taboo. The bond remained but its expression was clearly defined; they were not alone together.

One expression of this deep bond between brother and sister and its appropriate forms was the hunting relationship. A young girl was given the largess of her brother's hunt. Her female relatives assisted her but her independence was fostered along with the sense that her responsibilities lie to a particular individual hunter. A sister hastened to attend to her brother when he returned from the hunt and he provided for her even after marriage.

A young woman's sexual behaviour also reflected her bond with her brother. If a young woman disgraced herself sexually through inappropriate behaviour, the brother felt shamed.[42] Mrs. Wilson's explanation indicates that the strength of the taboo against a brother recognizing his sister's sexuality was such that her pregnancy, without the following of the proper forms, created a severe conflict for him and necessitated his leaving the area.

OTHER MALE RELATIVES: THE LESSER AVOIDANCE RELATIVES

Avoidance was lessened towards a girl's father or step-father, grandfather(s) and father's brother(s). Girls and unmarried young women could spend long stretches of time alone with any of these men and the relation was often a teaching one. Through these relatives the girl received an introduction to life

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[40] Ibid. p. 17
[41] Loc. cit.
[42] Ibid. p. 15

away on the hunting ground or trap line. Together frequently, they could talk freely but were not to make any sexual allusions. Any sexual contact was clearly defined as incest.

PROPER CONDUCT FOR A YOUNG WOMAN

After puberty a 'double standard' of proper sexual conduct existed for young men and young women. The boy's adventurousness was encouraged to include romance. The girl, however, was guided to forgetting her past freedom and to adhere to proper womanly conduct at the time of her first menstruation. "She should keep her eyes down, her tongue quiet, and her hands busy with work." [43] The young woman's household relatives then had the important role of keeping her carefully watched, chaperoned, and properly taught. Often when the household became too busy or too lax the stringent supervision lapsed and the new woman was successfully seduced. A critical time approached as pregnancy became obvious; people noticed; gossip, speculation, even lewd talk ensued. The parents wanted to know the identity of the father and threatened punishment if his name was withheld. Sometimes the predicament resolved easily into marriage and the formation of a new family but other times easy resolution eluded the young woman. Perhaps the boy was reluctant or she had had several boyfriends — each willing to brag but none willing to marry. Ideals of womanly conduct taught to her took on new significance. No longer did proper conduct seem so restrictive. She was assured of help in raising the child and of her place in the family home if she did not marry, but the child was considered to be the responsibility of those who created him or her.[44]

PROPER CONDUCT FOR A YOUNG MAN

According to Landes, young men were expected to be sexually active and dalliances were seen as youthful adventures. Their sexual activity, however, should involve only prospective spouses; *avoidance relationships* were to be respected. If a girl became pregnant correct behaviour indicated the young man should marry. Often he signified his intentions with gifts to the girl's father. Hallowell, however, says that in the days when boys were sent on vigils it was expected they would be pure, having avoided all contact with girls. If they were not, there was no hope of them obtaining the blessing essential to their career.[45]

HOMOSEXUALITY

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[43] Ibid. p. 45
[44] Ibid. p. 42-44
[45] Hallowell, p. 297

There is nothing in the sources reviewed for this paper to indicate Ojibwa society was hostile to homosexuals. It is clear women's roles were not so tightly proscribed as to prevent individual choice in roles and occupations. While a man's skill and prowess as a hunter were highly regarded, when circumstances required he could carry out tasks conventionally done by women without embarrassment or ridicule.

Neither Rogers nor Landes make any reference to specific roles for homosexuals but neither do they make specific reference to any censure of homosexuality. Indeed the subject is scarcely referred to by any of these authors. Landes mentions homosexuality once, as a possible topic of conversation for women, but gives no clue as to the tone or nature of such talk. Nor does Hallowell make any reference to roles for homosexuals. He does state that, logically, homosexuality is ruled out because persons of the same sex do not use the term that defines permissible sex relations.[46] Each of these anthropologists wrote at least several decades ago and presumably the more closed attitudes towards homosexuality prevalent in Canadian society at the time influenced their work in this regard.

This paper is such a brief review of sources that definite statements cannot be made here; however, it is clear that an obvious or overt hostility towards homosexuality does not seem to be part of Ojibwa sexuality.

SEXUAL UNHEALTHINESS AND ABERRATIONS

RAPE/INCEST

Girls sometimes feared rape by the men of their households. Step-fathers and daughters were *lesser avoidance relatives* and thus could be alone together for extended periods when hunting. While some step-fathers cared very much for their step-daughters and maintained a tender fatherly love throughout their lives, most of the stories of sexual offenses involve step-father rape and implicate step-fathers as the cultural symbols of rapists. Whether this frequency indicates

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[46] Hallowell, p. 293

that step-father rape really was the most common offense, or merely the most talked about offense, remains unclear.

> One step-father was said to protest to the horrified daughter, "But that's what everybody does when they go out hunting for ducks!" The girl usually manages to flee and raises an alarm at the camp. The step-father's act spurs the mother to greet the offender with brandished axe and a hearty assault upon his low character. He may well lose his wife and step-daughter for good or for varying periods of time. Sometimes only the daughter leaves to stay with other relatives.[47]

Only one story found among Mrs. Wilson's involves father-daughter incest.

> Nahwi, a widower, lived alone with his adolescent daughter and eventually violated her. When she announced the fact to the village, the man was greeted with most insulting scorn, his relatives repudiated him as a "dog" (in this context a particularly vile insult) and ostracized him until the end of his life."[48]

In both these stories, and they are typical, the young woman disclosed the abuse immediately rather than hiding the fact. "Fleeing to camp and raising an alarm" would seem to indicate she knew she would be supported, not blamed. Descriptions of the mother's "brandishing the axe" and the community-wide rebuke of Nahwi also attest to the young woman receiving support, not censure. Further indication of the perceived wrongfulness of this act comes from Mrs. Wilson's statement that the father himself "remained too shamed to look at his daughter and the illegitimate child of his which she bore".[49]

Mrs. Wilson told many stories of shamans' strategies to seduce young women in which they abuse their power relationship with the spirit world.

> Shay offended people on two grounds when he raped his daughter-in-law. He falsely claimed visionary sanction and committed incest. Being an *avoidance*

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[47] Landes, p. 31
[48] Ibid. p. 33
[49] Ibid. p. 48

> *relative* his rape had to be carefully premeditated. He told the young woman he had had a vision that his deceased son "would come to kiss his little boy" (not yet conceived) and warned his late son's wife to make no light. By the time the young woman realized the deception, she was pregnant. "She screamed that news around the village and she and her mother-in-law fell upon that man and nearly killed him. Then they moved away from him." [50]
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> Michel wanted Little Maid, a beautiful young girl to whom he bore the responsibilities of father-in-law. A *wabeno* [51] he was terribly feared and used to having all his sensual whims satisfied. At one of his ceremonies he slung the fire around in his mouth and said, "Eh, the *manidos* [52] want me to sleep with Little Maid." His daughter-in-law (sister to Little Maid) heard him. She ran to where he was sitting and kicked him on the chin, and gave him an awful beating because she didn't want him to ruin her young sister. And after she got through beating that old man she went away with Little Maid for good."[53]

In these instances, once again the offender's behaviour was clearly defined as incest. Despite the fearsome reputation of the shaman the first young woman disclosed and retaliated with support. The second young woman's sister was so enraged she directly defied the shaman. It should also be noted, that in all these cases part of the resolution involved people leaving — either for parts unknown or as a return to family in another community. This positive form of peace-keeping was disrupted as contact pressure increased and reserves and band lists were established.

> Clouded, a shaman, tried a variation of supernatural sanction to aquifer his step-daughter. She was ill and

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[50] Ibid. p. 34

[51] *Wabeno*: a particularly powerful shaman who used his power for evil.

[52] Also spelled *manitous*: the guardian or attending spirits.

[53] Landes, Ojibwa Woman, p. 34-35

> he treated her with a medicine to make her sleep. Then he 'played' over her until at last she knew she was going to have a baby, only she did not know who the father was. After the baby was born, the man married his step-daughter making her co-wife to her own mother. The mother accepted this status, horrified and shamed, but anxious to care for her duped daughter. The young girl became violent, "crazy from shame and worry" and died. ..."After everything was over, they went home, and his wife took the axe to cut off his head. But some men grabbed her before she could hit him. She was so mad. She said, 'You killed my daughter!' Then she took her boy with her and returned to her family's home."[54]

This final story ended with tragedy but, even so, several key points were consistent with the other tales. The man was clearly regarded as offending both spiritual values and incest taboos; though she was unsuccessful in resolving her horrible situation, the traumatized daughter did vehemently protest; there was no acceptance of her forced incestuous status; and the mother attempted to avenge the young woman's humiliation and death. That the men prevented her attack upon the shaman may indicate some tolerance for the incest. Yet, as the men do not attempt to dissuade the woman and her son from leaving, the shaman receives no overt support.

SUMMARY

- The link between the physical and sexual nature of the self was recognized and sexual development proceeded in an integrated way. Sexual boundaries were recognized and taught, often subtly, and with humour.
- From an early age, respect was inculcated for the correct behaviours and relationships with regard to distinct classes of relatives, particularly *avoidance relatives* and *cross-cousins*.

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[54] Ibid. p. 31-32

- While a double standard seems to have existed for the conduct of unmarried men and women, nonetheless sex-role stereotyping was not excessively rigid.
- Certain acts were definitely and consistently defined as incestuous, and if offenses occurred they consistently met with disapproval and retribution.
- A major sanction for those who did behave incestuously was inescapable loss of health for oneself or one's loved ones and a weakening of *p'madziwin.*

Part Two: Change

LOOKING OUT: EUROPEAN WORLDVIEW

THE PANOPTICON

Within the vast array of literature about the conflict in culture between the Europeans and the First Nations, the work of historian Michel Foucault has particular importance for this paper. He gives us a new way of thinking about the techniques Europeans have used to impose their ways of thinking about society, cultural difference and justice onto the peoples of the Americas. To explain his insights into European perceptions of community and ways of socially controlling people, Foucault uses as an analogy the Panopticon, a particular design for a prison invented by the Englishman Jeremy Bentham during the nineteenth century.

Before the nineteenth century, prisoners were confined to dungeons as a means of removing them from the sight (and therefore the mind) of "polite" society. But during the nineteenth century, influenced by the philosophers and social thinkers of the 18th-century Enlightenment, Europeans wanted to find a form of imprisonment which would coerce inmates into becoming rule-abiding, literally "re-forming" them into obedient citizens.

Bentham met this challenge with an ingenious device he called the Panopticon — literally an "all-seeing" building that let the guards watch the prisoners, but

stopped the prisoners from seeing the guards. The building was to be circular, with a central tower in which the guards would sit and watch the inmates. The jail cells, each housing, and isolating, an individual, were to be arranged along the outside of the circle with one side facing the central tower and the other side facing outwards. Since both walls would have windows, it meant that the guards would be able to see the prisoners silhouetted against the sunlight, but the prisoners, looking in toward the darker tower, would not be able to see the guards watching them.

Coercion was central to Bentham's logic which went as follows: if the prisoners knew that they were being watched, but never could tell exactly when or by whom, then they would always be on their best behaviour. The prisoners would want to prove to their keepers that they were reformed, since this might influence how they were treated or improve their chances for release from prison. Bentham thought that the force of always behaving correctly would eventually work on the mind and the thoughts of the prisoners, turning them into individuals who would continuously monitor their own behaviour. By internalizing the guard's watchful gaze, prisoners, living in isolation from each other, would become their own guards, and would always strive to think and act as society dictated.

No prison was ever built exactly as Bentham intended. Nonetheless, ideas about ways to coerce and control that were embodied in the Panopticon persist today. Michel Foucault argues that its underlying *logic* has been used in society as a whole. Surveillance cameras, microchips implanted under the skin, data banks which keep track of how we use our credit cards, library cards and telephones (to mention only a few) are all part of the same logic that inspired the Panopticon: to watch people without their knowing when they are being watched, in order to better control them.

In fact, Foucault continues, this way of socially controlling people — separating and categorizing them — has been a growing tendency in Europe since the time of the great plague of the 14th century. At that time, in order to control the spread of plague which moved by means no one then knew, the ruling officials in towns across France observed strict and meticulous regulation. The most minute details of daily life were monitored by a complex hierarchy. Officials locked people into their houses. Food was delivered to each household and a daily roll was called to make sure no one had escaped. If someone had died during the night, the officials would learn that as well. No household could hide

the fact that they were infected. Foucault refers to the plague-stricken town as "transversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation and writing".[55]

Western individualism is one result of this deeply-ingrained and growing logic which says each person is a separate unit who is controlled directly by the state and is responsible for regulating their own behaviour in order to maintain the order of the state. Thus, instead of community as the Ojibwa understood it — a web of interconnections among people, the land, and the non-physical world, with *p'madaziwin* depending upon the balance among all aspects of the world — community is seen as a collection of individuals, monitored, individually and invisibly by an all-seeing and distant state. The *logic* of the Panopticon prevails.

Prisons are one place today in which people are obviously watched and monitored in this way. The Indian residential school system, now abolished, certainly stemmed from this same history of thought. European educational systems still follow this logic when classrooms are arranged in rows and the teacher's desk is placed at the back or on a raised platform. Laws can also be a kind of Panopticon. The Indian Act has been the Canadian government's technique for controlling First Nations peoples by breaking down communities and families, and forcing individuals to assimilate to Western ways.

Making people visible to the ruler — whether the official of the plague-stricken town or the state or government or the Indian Agent — became a powerful tool for the running of a society based on hierarchies of race, class, and gender. Europeans like to make the world visible in order to better control it. Making things visible is the logic of natural sciences like biology and physics: to make the secret workings of nature visible and thus controllable by industry and technology. Making things visible is also the logic of social or human sciences; statistical surveys and IQ tests have been used to order, control, and dominate differing groups within society.

European societies are based on a particular idea of order arising from the rule of reason and rationality. That which does not fit, whether an indigenous society in the Americas or the complex natural world, into a specific category within this system of order has traditionally been classified as disorder, irrational, and unreasonable and thus becomes a problem to be solved or a crisis to be averted.

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[55] Michel Foucault, "The Panopticon" in Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison, pp. 195-228, Pantheon, NYC, 1977. p.195

CONTACT

> For us the trees and valleys were not wild.
> It was when you came, that for us, the wild west began. [56]

> Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narraganstt, the Mohican, the Pokanoket and many other once powerful tribes of our people? ... vanished ... as snow before a summer sun.[57]
>
> *Tecumseh*

Having considered Foucault's ideas within the analogy of the Panopticon we can better understand the powerful mental or conceptual constructs Europeans brought with them to the Americas. In the tangle of vines and growth, in the endless forests they saw dark *wilderness* — that which is outside order. The people of the land they dismissed as *savages* — those who exist outside reason. For the Europeans, healthy societies with their own logic and ways of living in the world, were only a disturbing chaos which they continue to this day to try to control and order according to their own logic. The failure of the European justice system has been a failure to recognize the culturally different logic of First Nations peoples, a logic which focuses on communities rather than isolated individuals; a logic which focuses on healing and making whole, on strengthening the web of interconnections, rather than coercion and re-forming the person.

CULTURE IN CONFLICT

TRAUMATIZED COMMUNITIES

> Native communities are not vestigial: rather they are the repositories of native hopes and ideals of self-government.[58]
>
> *Tom Berger*

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[56] T.C. McLuhan, Touch the Earth: A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence, Dutton, N.Y., 1971

[57] D. Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, N.Y., 1970, p.1

[58] Tom Berger, A Long and Terrible Shadow, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1992, p. 161

> Individual demoralization leads to despair and demoralization of whole communities.[59]
>
> *Tom Berger*

> Capturing the concept of community and circle are key to understanding what happens in Hollow Water.[60]
>
> *Berma Bushie*

The Panopticon, as we've seen, is the model of European ordering of space which underlies their world view, one which is hierarchical and unidirectional. Long before the invention of the Panopticon, ways to separate, order and categorize people in order to better control them have been important in European perceptions of civilization and concepts of community. The ordering of space underlying Anishnabe worldview, however, is best understood within the analogy of the *circle* and an image of community as a web of meaningful interconnections among kin, the land, and the non-physical world.

For the Ojibwa living in a harsh environment, with a world view premised on balance and interconnectedness, not control, concepts of community evolved differently than in Europe. Traditionally, community meant: a small family group; isolation over half the year; intense mutual dependence; a strong spiritual base; and, well-established boundaries among individuals in their ways of relating. Larger groups usually came together only in the summer. "When needed, however, the Ojibwa, loosely allied and conversant could form a powerful alliance against outside threat."[61]

Thus, understandings of community referred much more to the relations among people than to people's proximity to one another. Community stemmed from a sense of connection, to one another, to the land itself, and to Creation. Community referred to the binding of a people through a sharing of central principles and an awareness of their interconnectedness rather than an ordering of hierarchies. There was no state and power of the state on the one hand and, in contrast on the other hand, individuals over which the state had regulatory authority. Instead, society, not founded on hierarchies of class and gender, had

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[59] Ibid. p. 55

[60] Berma Bushie addressing the CHCH/Federal/Provincial Steering Committee, Winnipeg, Sept. 1996

[61] Peter Schmalz, The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1991, p. 11

its base in autonomous individuals and the relationship of each individual to the spiritual realm.

Communal well-being was evidenced in success in the hunt which meant the absence of famine and disease. This state was dependent upon right relationships among individuals and balance among, and respect for , all the interdependencies of the world as explained in the Ojibwa creation belief. In essence, the community as a whole sought the Good Life, just as individuals did, through the gathering of *p'madaziwin*.

COMMUNITY AND LANGUAGE

Community and language are allied. Each helps to shape the other. Language is more than the words themselves — it is further refined by the relationships among the words. Connections unique to the language give the thoughts expressed their own distinctive character. Concepts inherently communicated within the way words of one language relate may not be communicable at all in another. Not static, languages evolve but retain their inherent principles. Language is the culture's breathing.

Community too, is a living entity. Its nature depends on the types of relatedness and the connections among the individuals who make it up. The integrity of connections among individuals create the community and determine its integrity, validity, and its levels of health or dysfunction.

English is an imposed language, with organizing principles not congruent with Ojibwa. Reserves and their nodes of settlement are imposed structures. Neither English as language nor the western ideas of community, evolved from the existing Ojibwa culture. They were imposed upon it for the express purpose of altering that culture with all the finesse of make-shift carpentry. Within this imposed system, individuals feel, though they cannot necessarily articulate, their community's pain.

European forms of regulation change not only functional aspects of culture but also those less tangible, like sense of community. Western society had no understanding of *p'madaziwin* and, therefore, could not condone it. Not perceiving community as a web of connections among people and their environment, the colonizers imposed their concept of community — year round permanent dwellings in a fixed location with regulating authorities. All the ways of maintaining 'community' prior to colonization were thrown into disarray.

The point in considering traditional forms and sense of community is not to re-create time past; rather as a reminder of how colonization permeates a people's whole way of being. Colonization traumatizes 'community' as well as individuals.

Psychological trauma erodes the most basic structures of the self and so leaves a less than complete self to cope with the present and shape a future. Because of this damage to sense of self, traumatic events such as colonization, have tremendous power to cast themselves time and time again ahead of the individuals affected. The future is forever stamped with the traumatic past. Understanding colonization as a traumatic process, and analyzing its effects will help in building a secure future unburdened by endemic sexual abuse and other ills.

The topics outlined in the following sections have all contributed to the traumatization of community and resulted in individual and community illness.

ASSIMILATION (MANY ERAS, MANY POLICIES, ONE GOAL)

In 1880 Sir John A. MacDonald stated that government policy toward Indians was "... to wean them by slow degrees, from their nomadic habits, ... and by slow degrees absorb them onto the land. In the meantime they must be fairly protected." [62]

In 1950 Indian Affairs announced a new policy. It stated that: "the ultimate goal of our Indian policy is the integration of the Indians into the general life of the country....during a temporary period of transition special treatment and legislation are necessary."[63]

In 1969, Jean Chretien, Minister of Indian Affairs announced that "policies must lead to full, free and non-discriminatory participation of Indian people in Canadian society".[64] Thus native special status including any rights that inhere as a result of being the original occupiers of the land would cease to exist.

Assimilation is a process of a non-spiritual, institutionalized power whereby the values, morals and ways of one culture are adopted, usually through force or

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[62] J.R. Ponting & R. Gibbins, Out of Irrelevance, Butterworth Co., Toronto, 1980, p.17

[63] Ibid. p. 18

[64] Government of Canada Statement on Indian Policy, DIAND, 1969 (commonly known as the White Paper), p. 5

coercion, by another. The new ways are usually those of a dominant and imposed culture. Assimilation has remained the central pillar of Canadian Indian policy despite variations in the terminology.

TREATIES

The first treaty between the Indian people and colonial officials in North America was signed in 1670. This was followed by other signings until 1923. From the 1970's until the present, substantial Aboriginal-Canada agreements dealing with land were concluded, including the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement which is considered the first modern-day treaty.

The numbered treaties conducted by George Morris on behalf of the Canadian government opened the Canadian west for settlement in the late 1800s. The treaties were a continuation of British Crown policy found in such documents as the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and recognition that inherent rights to the land are vested in Aboriginal people.

Treaty One, 1871, included the Ojibwa now defined as belonging to the Hollow Water Band. Treaty One and the other numbered treaties contained similar clauses including the following:

> an agreement of peace and amity, the cession of land, initial payments to Indians, small annual payments in cash or goods, the designation of chief and councillors to negotiate and administer the treaty, guarantee of land reserved for Indians and or the right to use unoccupied territory in its natural state and promises of government services such as education and health care[65]

Obviously a thorough examination of the treaties is not a focus of this paper; however, there are three key points regarding the government's policy perspectives of the treaties which should be noted. These are:

- acceptance of the Crown's authority
- acceptance of a dependent relationship
- assimilative underlying precepts, with education, Christianization and settlement on reserves as the means of assimilation.

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[65] Derek Smith, Canadian Indians and the Law: Selected Documents 1663-1972, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1975, p. xxvii

With the signing of Treaty One the process of change intensified for First Nations people living in and around the area designated as Hollow Water Reserve. Prior to 1871, and the heralding of the 'opening of the Canadian west ' with its implied promise of a better life for all, the level of contact with Euro-Canadian culture had changed little over the preceding 100 years. The only permanent presence was the Hudson's Bay Company and due to the people's location on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and away from the American border they were little touched by the main fur traffic and establishment of strategic forts.

Acculturation pressures intensified as missions and small church-run schools arrived. Pressure increased to define and confine band members geographically due to imposed laws that children must attend schools. Passage of the first Indian Act in 1876[66] intensified the pressure to adopt European ways.

THE INDIAN ACT

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the first Indian Act of 1876. Legislation and policy directives of the time were collected in a document that dominated the lives of First Nations people for the next century. Though key sections have been revised it still intrudes into all aspects of life and has a regulatory effect on all.

> The Indian Act is a Lands Act. It is a Municipal Act, an Education Act and a Societies Act. It is primarily social legislation, but it has a very broad scope: There are provisions about liquor, agriculture and mining as well as Indian lands, band membership and so forth. It has elements that are embodied in perhaps two dozen different acts of any of the provinces and overrides some federal legislation in some respects. It has the force of the Criminal Code and the impact

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[66] Controversy exists about which rights flow from inherent or Aboriginal rights, which stem from treaties, and which are delineated in the Indian Act of 1876 and its various revisions. For example, the Indian Act applies to all natives who are legally defined as native. But many of these people live in areas of Canada in which no treaties were concluded. For them, land and other rights stem from their occupancy of the land, their aboriginal rights.

> of a constitution on those people and communities that come within its purview. [67]

Significant not only in what it imposes and regulates but also in its eradication of any right to self-determination, the Indian Act plays a key note in assimilative goals. In the context of this paper the pertinent issues are:

- The Indian Act defined who could live on reserves;
- The Indian Act created permanent settlements with permanent residents;
- Residents required permission to leave the reserve.

This legislated interference profoundly affected Indian life. Fragmenting of families resulted from the arbitrary and inflexible rules about which families belonged to which permanent settlement. As shown in Mrs. Wilson's stories, an important aspect of peace-making lay in the freedom to move away from a bad situation and join with another group of extended family. For those subjected to sexual assault, no way out remained. Reserves could be likened to 'pressure cookers' as regulating authorities insisted people remain in close quarters in fixed groups. Factionalism and intense rivalry among some families resulted.

Enfranchisement

The process of enfranchisement laid out in the Act allowed 'sober and industrious' Indians to cease to become Indian in law and thus acquire full rights of Canadian citizenship, most notably the vote and the right to purchase and consume alcohol. It was an attempt through the Act to sever the individual's tie with community and culture.

Power

The Indian Act gave very broad powers to its agents and administrators. George Manuel's statement in *The Fourth World* covers the policy in one sentence. "it was the job of these Indian agents, these new white chiefs to displace our traditional leaders in their care over our day-to-day lives in order to bring our way of life into line with the policies that had been decreed in Ottawa."[68]

THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

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[67] D. Munro, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs, circa 1974, in J. R. Ponting and R. Gibbins, p.8

[68] George Manuel and Michael Posluns, The Fourth World: An Indian Reality and Social Change, Free Press, NY, 1974, p.54

Policies of intervention which took children from supposedly dysfunctional families, resulted in many children being removed, not only from their families, but from their cultural roots. In the 1960s apprehension rates were so high some reserves lost nearly a generation of children to child welfare authorities. As recently as 1983 Indian children landed in care at four and one half times the rate for all children in Canada.[69] In Mrs. Wilson's stories women "screamed the news" and "raised the alarm" when abuse took place. Fear of removal through child welfare policies has played a huge role in the silencing of children, parents and communities.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

> Oh don't mind him. They even dusted the woodpiles. And it's given him a permanent case of snit. He'd think Christ himself was unclean if he were to turn up Indian.[70]
>
> *Wife of a residential school survivor*

In Canada, Christianization has long been synonymous with civilization. Entwinement of Christian church and Indian Affairs administration was inevitable when the involvement of missionaries was central in establishing contact. Many missionaries worked hard to learn native languages and ways and to protect Indian people from unscrupulous and seedy representatives of the broader society. As early as the 1600s the Jesuit Relations refer to the fine character of the Indian people and a Jesuit's wish that a European character was more seemly.[71] But with the ideas "christianize and civilize" inextricably linked, missions more often than not wounded people's hearts and souls.

Since Christianity holds as a basic tenet that the only way to the Creator resides with Jesus, conflicts with Ojibwa religion ensued from the beginning. With the

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69 Tony Martens and Brenda Daily, The Spirit Weeps, Nechi Institute, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 1988, p.111

70 Personal communications with the author.

71 Father Biard, Jesuit Relations III, p. 93. Biard's observations, quoted here, are repeated by many other observers: "we have never seen anything except always great respect and love among them, which was a great grief to us when we turned our eyes upon our own shortcomings. For to see an assembly of French people without reproaches, slights, envy and quarrels with each other, is as difficult as to see the sea without waves, except in Monasteries and Convents where grace triumphs over nature."

imposition of Christianity, colonizers tried to, and in many instances succeeded, in breaking the bonds with the spirit world and removing the power individuals gained through *p'madaziwin.*

Christian missionaries tried to destroy the 'good life' as known and practiced by the Ojibwa, both individually and in the community. Christianity, as imposed upon the Ojibwa, remained inexorably bound up with European culture. Christianizing meant accommodating to the whole cultural package of the Europeans not just certain religious principles.

Residential schools

Education, administered by the church became an essential tool in the assimilation of Indians. In 1879 the federal government adopted the American model of residential schools with the added provision that these schools be operated by various Christian denominations.[72] In 1920 the Indian Act was amended to make school attendance compulsory for all First Nations children between the ages of seven and fifteen.'[73] The long term consequences of these schools, designed to 'christianize and civilize', have been disastrous. For as long as five generations in some areas of Canada, children were removed from their homes, families, culture and language to be immersed far away for long periods in what has been described as a cultural commando course.

Often forcibly separated from their parents, children entered a strange new world. Their long hair was cut off and school uniforms issued. Forbidden to speak their own language, living by strict rules which prevented any contact with siblings or children of the opposite sex, these children endured long years of isolation and loneliness.

The experience of Cree children in James Bay in the 1970s describes the severe stress stemming from enforced and rapid inculcating of new language and culture.

> During their first year of residential school the beginners experience radical discontinuities in [the process by which they adapt to their culture and learn its ways.] The values, attitudes, and behavioural expectations which motivate the dormitory counsellors

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72 Assembly of First Nations, Breaking the Silence, Assembly of First Nations Health Commission, Ottawa, 1994, p.13

73 Ibid. 16

> and teachers in their interaction with the children differ sharply from those of Cree parents. In school children have few tasks to do and these rarely elate to the welfare of the whole group. Competition and direct expression of aggression are reinforced. ... [By year's end] they have learned new ways of behaving and thinking and have been rewarded for conformity to norms which contradict those which they learned before coming to school. ... They have begun to act in ways appropriate for Euro-Canadian culture but inappropriate in their own culture. ... After alternating for five or six years between the traditional milieu in the summer and the urban residential school in the winter severe conflicts arise.[74]

In addition, severe physical and sexual abuse, and psychological torment were frequently part of an individual's residential experience. Survivors were ill-prepared to live in the natural community of the family after years in this artificial and dehumanizing environment.

Residential schools are a major factor in the lack of parenting skills and in the communications problems currently faced by First Nation families. Traditional family structure and cohesion, child rearing approaches, and quality of life were lost. Residential schools left a void in their place.

> Old productive skills tied to the land were lost. Parenting skills diminished as succeeding generations became more and more institutionalized and experienced little nurturing. Low self-esteem and self-concept problems arose as children were taught that their own culture was inferior and uncivilized even 'savage' [75]

The effectiveness of the schools in providing even the rudiments of education has also been questioned. Curricula designed for Christianization and acculturation left the native student disadvantaged compared to non-native

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[74] Peter S. Sindell, "Discontinuities in the Enculturation of Mistassini Cree Children" in Conflict in Culture, Saint Paul University Press, Ottawa, 1968, p. 91

[75] Martens and Daily, p. 110

students in secular education. The small numbers of graduates who did go on to secular schools found themselves poorly prepared.[76]

Residential schools disrupted children's lives, shattered families and left subsequent generations confused and enraged. Stories of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and severe physical abuse by the authorities within the schools continue to emerge. [77]

SEXUAL NAIVETÉ/SEXUAL INNOCENCE

In many of the schools missionaries taught western culture to Indian children. Yet, in western society, priests and nuns are marginal people. They forswear sex, marriage, and family, living their whole lives within a religious culture.

Further, among priests and nuns, missionaries are a marginal group. They move away from their own cultural group and yet take their culturally-based and culturally-biased views with them. They spend their lives isolated from any influence from their own culture and kind. The Ojibwa learned very peculiar features of western culture that did not prepare them for living in either Ojibwa or western society. The following story, from a Cree woman, shows just how poorly prepared people were for life outside the institution.

> When I met the man who was to become my husband I liked him very much right from the first. He was a good-looking guy and after getting to know each other a bit at my mom's house we went for a walk one day and sat and held hands and talked and talked.
>
> After that I went home feeling wonderful then later that evening I began to panic. I just knew I was pregnant and that he hadn't asked me to marry him or anything. I didn't even know if I was going to see him again.
>
> When he came calling the next day I was really a mess. I began crying and telling how ashamed I was to be pregnant. He thought I was fooling with him and asked who had made me pregnant. Then I really

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[76] Ponting and Gibbins, p. 20

[77] For a more complete picture see Breaking the Silence (listed in bibliography) and Basil Jonston, Indian School Days, Key Porter Books, Toronto, 1988.

started bawling," Oh you!", I said, "First you get me pregnant and now you deny it too!"
"Whaa?? " he said, "What are you talking about?"
"Well! You touched me!" I said.
"Woman," he said, "I held your hand! How do you think that got you pregnant?"
Then he explained things to me and I told him, at the school all the nuns had ever said was, "Don't let a man touch you or you will be pregnant!"
Now it's very funny but that's how innocent we were, being brought up like that, never in a family and only even seeing our Mom and Dad every few years.[78]

Lack of knowledge and distorted concepts are problems. Lack of family experience for many native women raised in convents or residential schools compounds the problem. Without the experience of family life they lack a model of healthy sexuality and sexual expression as a point of reference. Together these factors make the requisite openness and security necessary for discussion and imparting of any aspects of the whole topic of sexuality unlikely.

Even without post-sexual abuse complications, sexuality may be considered acutely embarrassing and all sexual expression as painful and disgusting. Now, some school boards and other educators work to teach children the differences among 'special touching' and 'secret touching' and 'touching trouble'[79] For many native women and men too there is no framework of 'good' or 'bad touch'. There is only confusion. A further complication the authors of The Spirit Weeps note is how sexual abuse may even be seen as punishment for sinful thoughts or actions and the person may blame him/herself for it.

In matters sexual, knowledge does not mean loss of the virtues of innocence. Rather it helps, protects and guides individuals as they develop as physical and thus sexual beings.

INCEST TABOOS, AND THE EFFECTS OF IMPOSED CULTURAL CHANGE

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[78] Personal communications with the author.

[79] For more information see The Spirit Weeps and Just Before Dawn. Both books are listed in the bibliography.

Ojibwa society laid out roles for women yet admired, rather than derided or ostracized, individual women who diverged from those roles. The culture honoured men's personal power and prowess and expected them, as individuals, to seek their own personal power through fasting and dreaming. Clearly, this society placed a premium on individualistic behaviour, and yet, those who committed incest consistently met strong censure, for the Ojibwa, as all people do, set up ways of regulating their social relations with others. For them, as for all cultures, incest taboos existed.

Though definitions of incest vary across cultures, most cultures forbid sexual relations among close biological relatives. In traditional Ojibwa society sexual relationships among certain types of kin, even without biological relatedness, were also forbidden. For *avoidance relatives**, freely talking together or being alone for any length of time was prohibited, so, it goes without saying, that sexual contact was also forbidden. Neither was there to be any marriage between *clan* members. To some extent, preferred marriages were those between *cross-cousins*.** It was said *cross-cousin* marriages, "gave a head start on kindness". [80]

While change in all human groups is ubiquitous, enforced, pervasive and rapid change is not. European thought included beliefs, coupled with technological superiority, that allowed its imposition upon others and disruptive change ensued. Colonization effected change in every aspect of Ojibwa culture. Sexuality and sexual boundaries were not immune.

The arrival of Christianizing influences and authority made first-cousin marriages illegal. Thus the traditional practice of *cross-cousin* marriage was banned. For southern Ontario these imposed changes accelerated during the mid-nineteenth century. In northwestern Ontario and southeastern Manitoba the changes did not have a serious impact upon the people until as recently as the 1930s. Governments enforced the marriage bans with jail terms and the withholding of treaty monies.[81]

The imposed regulations banning traditionally approved forms of marriage have had ramifications. Because ways of responding socially are deeply internalized relationship forms can persist. *Cross-cousin* ribaldry, the earthy joking and

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* see page 13 for definitions of *avoidance relatives*

** see page 13 for definition of *cross-cousin*

80 Landes, p.38

81 Landes, p. 86

casual banter continued. There was disjuncture between the behaviour required in the new environment and the individual's internal organization. Behaviour traditionally considered appropriate only toward a prospective spouse persisted, but actual marriage was forbidden by regulation. The traditional, clearly established connections between the behaviour of ribald joking and its recipient as potential spouse blurred. This blurring of sexual boundaries created by the imposed regulations may be a contributor to the myth of incest as a cultural norm. It definitely created confusion about correct norms and behaviour.

SEXUAL TRAUMATIZATION

Within traditional Ojibwa communities certain relationships were defined as incestuous and explicitly forbidden. Incest taboos were powerful and respected. Mrs. Wilson's stories and other sources show us no sanction, through circumstance or otherwise, which gave credence to incestuous behaviour.

Certainly, individuals violating sexual taboos met with reprisal. As well, there was community censure and it was believed illness or misfortune would come to those who engaged in such flagrantly improper comportment. Yet, Landes records that Mrs. Wilson talked of situations where widespread violations of the taboos occurred:

> Drunken orgies are times of extreme sex license and young girls may participate. Women at such times almost invariably throw up their skirts and invite any man in the vicinity, or all the men. Incest taboos are forgotten and women, if ignored, may even try to force the men. Men do not undress but creep around looking for women, usually women who are tabued to them, scrupulously avoiding their own wives. During one orgy a man walked around dropping his clothes in anticipation; first he took his mother, then his mother's sister who lay on the other side of their joint husband. Elsewhere a man was investigating his sleeping sister, while his drunken wife sang lustily alongside.[82]

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[82] Ibid. p. 49

Scattered through the literature from the *Jesuit Relations* on are other passages denoting similar descriptions of widespread breaches of the incest taboos. Though the passages are not always related to the Ojibwa there is a great deal of consistency in the descriptions. It is also important to note that the writers of these passages seem to imply an almost casual tossing aside of the incest taboos and no apparent consequences for individual or society.

Given the timing of Landes' interviews with Mrs. Wilson, it is possible that such activities took place in an environment which had already been damaged by the forces of colonialization. Certainly, for later periods of contact, in regions subjected to the residential schools, much of the explanation for drunken sexual violations in a culture with traditionally powerful incest taboos must come from the tremendous de-moralization individuals experienced and the endemic abuse and breaches of all cultural taboos by the authorities within the schools.

Cultural Breakdown

For the earlier periods, and for regions where there have been no residential schools, understanding colonization helps make sense of these contradictions. No shared agreement, colonization is an imposed state with far reaching effects. That the Ojibwa and other First Nations were increasingly required to act in accordance with the European world and its laws does not mean that they were easily adapting internally. There is no doubt as contact increased, the pressures of cultural conflict and imposed change increased. Cultures break down under prolonged stress. Widespread breaches of sexual taboos can be seen as a sign of cultural and individual de-moralization and despair.

Alcohol

Extensive and frequent use of alcohol or psychotropic substances was not habitual among the Ojibwa. Often toxic mixes of alcohol were introduced by Europeans for the express purpose of disrupting and weakening the traditional cultures. Its mystifying and potent force is reflected in native languages which use the same word for 'drunk' and 'crazy'. Among the passages in the literature denoting widespread taboo shattering, alcohol abuse is a common factor. Alcohol abuse erodes inhibitions and breaks down societal prohibitions. Widespread breaches of taboos may be seen as symptoms of serious cultural breakdown due to acculturation pressure coupled with the powerful effects of alcohol.

Ritual

The writers of the passages denoting these widespread breaches of forbidden sexual relationships imply a casual tossing aside of the taboos. Cultures impart internally consistent ways in which individuals form relationships with others. Taboos are not casually tossed aside. Repeated or widespread breaches of taboos cause disruption, confusion and shame. If some mechanism of justification exists, or there are restorative and cleansing ways, confusion may be relieved and consistent, coherent meaning restored. Cultures throughout history have had ritualized ways taboos are breached as a catharsis through which the significance and importance of the taboos becomes re-affirmed. Traditional Ojibwa society did require great emotional interpersonal restraint and forbearance through all life's difficulties. The Huron culture was similar in many respects and we know the Huron had a period of tremendous release every few years in the Feast of the Dead. Schmalz records that among the Ojibwa the Feast of the Dead provided a unifying force.[83] If practiced similarly to the Huron it would have been a ritual of tremendous release in which through exhumation and reinternment of the ancestors' bones life was reaffirmed and periods of mourning ended.

Shaming and De-moralization

If taboos are violated outside a ritual of release and re-affirmation as in the Feast of the Dead shaming must take place. Landes records, "even brazen Nahwi who raped his own daughter was too shamed to look upon her or the illegitimate child he created."[84] After widespread taboo shattering, many are shamed. For people to continue to possess a 'morally defensible' image of self, this shame must be resolved. If there cannot be resolution, then denial of shame, loss of indispensable self worth, and a further loss of sexual/moral balance result. Violation of sexual mores and taboos signifies loss of balance and harmony.

Alcoholism is also a disease of imbalance. It has been said that an alcoholic drinks to obliterate his (or her) overwhelming sense of shame about drunkenness. It follows as well then that the shame of violating sexual mores precipitates a cycle of further violations and further shame.

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[83] Schmalz, p. 11
[84] Ibid. p. 48

NORMALIZATION

The myth of incest as traditional, and thus acceptable, behaviour may be further discredited through developing understanding of the term *normalization.* Erroneous ideas may become acceptable through normalization — the process that makes non-normative behaviours, attitudes or situations start to seem customary i.e. normal. As a young native woman explained, "It hadn't occurred to me to confide in anyone that I was being sexually abused because everyone I knew was in the same situation; it seemed normal to me."[85] This victim had no idea that she could disclose the situation and it would be perceived as abnormal and in need of change.

SOUL MURDER[86]/*WINTIKOS*

Sensitivity to the respect required by the human spirit permeated traditional Ojibwa culture. Individual choice and decision-making were respected and, as individuals, people were held accountable for their actions. *Bad medicine* has been described as medicine that forced another to do things against their will. The use of love medicine or potions was seen as *bad medicine* because it made a woman fall in love with a man against her will. Forcing another against her will led to erosion of that will and a weakening of spirit. Ultimately, *bad medicine*'s, corrupt power damaged or destroyed will and spirit. The Ojibwa recognized that abuse of power leads to wounds upon the soul which are as potentially fatal and as abhorrent as physical wounds. The real fear with *bad medicine* wasn't death but the destruction of the soul.

Wintiko, the cannibalistic spirit who roamed the land, especially in times of hunger, provoked intense fear traditionally. People could be transformed into *wintikos* by sorcery or by the malevolence of the spirit itself. *Wintiko* existed as a manifestation of devouring cannibalistic force. Nuclear holocaust.

The early stages of this aberration, when the person had awareness of the deviance, was considered curable, and the shamans were always in attendance. In the final stage of the psychosis the *wintiko* became the greatest menace known. Terror walked with the *wintiko.* The intense fear of this destructive force must relate in part to recognition and abhorrence of the wounds to the soul it inflicted, to its potential as soul-murderer, and not just the fear of starvation and cannibalism among a people constantly challenged to find game.

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[85] John Bradshaw, Family Secrets, aired on TV Ontario, Sept. 1996

Historically, people who felt the cannibalistic urge, began to perceive their loved ones as luscious beavers and, as they felt their own devouring by the *wintiko* spirit, asked to be tied up, even killed, before that psychic energy gathered force, consumed them completely. Then, they in turn, as *wintiko* would continue the awful energy. They felt the *soul-murdering* force hovering near and struggled against it even by willing their own death.

Malevolent energy released by the *wintiko*, or absorbed from the *wintiko* by those without the power to resist (especially when in a weakened state from starvation), was then manifest in the victim and the devouring energy continued. To become *wintiko* meant a continued existence but with the loss of one's humanizing soul, with a complete severing of relatedness. All the richness and meaning of being human was stripped away.

If the derangement progressed to the final violent manifestation a cure was considered to be impossible. The only solution available was the killing of the *wintiko*. This killing was not considered murder. There would be no vengeance sought by relatives, for the *wintiko* was no longer considered human but a soul-murdered shell capable of great destruction. The bravery of the relative who undertook this awful task on behalf of the community was recognized.

Perhaps a parallel can be made to the devouring, evil energy of *some* sexual offenders. Western thought dismisses non-corporeal energy and yet it seems as if the *wintiko spirit* lives among us yet. A male survivor struggling to live, and determined to live without offending physically or spiritually, gives us a glimpse of the terror of the hovering *wintiko* — of soul-murder.

> My self-hatred seems to be a hatred, immense and immeasurable, of my abuser whose malevolent energy I have made my own in order to survive. As I sucked his penis or was rammed by it the horrible, monstrous energy that drove him was also imparted to me. As I sucked I drew it in. To survive I had to submit to the abuse or be killed — that was my belief. But in that submission, though the physical me survived, he murdered parts of me and his energy was released within me. It has become my own.

> I want to kill myself as I write this now. I feel this dull ache internally. I'm looking at my wrist now and I'm observing the scars much the same way I observe a subject to draw artistically. I'm looking at these scars old and new. What comes to mind is I want to kill not just the pain, as has been suggested to me, but to expand and kill the man who has impressed his energy on me so deeply that I incorporated it; I embraced his horror and made it my own. No, killing my abuser won't help. By killing me I kill it.[86]

Many who have been abused do not go on to offend. Somehow their humanity is guarded and the destructive forces staved. A key lies in the story of Sioux Woman and her mother.* The mother's love and refusal to give up caring for her daughter, her seeking spiritual power and assistance, did defeat the shaman and restore her daughter's health. A connection was maintained. A sense of community prevailed.

Hollow Water, today, does not give up on those who have become deviant, those who express anger, pain and despair through meanness and sexual offenses against those who are weaker. Hollow Water stands there the way the good shamans of old did, the way Sioux Woman's mother did. Like them, the CHCH team members must keep their own energy balanced and their own relationships right with the world of human persons and with the Creator's energy. They are not naive or foolish; they do not consider themselves infallible. They just go in and try. And they go where a lot of people refuse to even look. Sexual abuse is an area of human depravity so abhorrent that Herman wrote of society's "episodic amnesia", of our human preference to label "the unthinkable, the unbelievable".[87] Society still prefers to discount even the existence of the terrors Hollow Water works to alleviate. And does so with only the fine strands, the pulse, the interconnections of an Ojibwa view of 'community' to contain the devouring energy and allow the offender's and victim's human spirit to grow.

SUMMARY

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[86] Personal conversations with victims and survivors.

* see page 9 for the story of Sioux Woman's mother.

[87] Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery, Basic Books, Harper Collins, NY 1992, p. 7. Judith Herman's ideas are examined in detail in The Victim Circle within this compendium.

This chapter has sketched some of the aspects of Indian reality that shape (and contort) the lives of residents in the Hollow Water region. These historical and contextual aspects provide background essential to understanding the particular complexities, both conceptual and pragmatic, within which Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH) works.

It has focused on an Ojibwa view of the world, especially the concepts of community and the pervasive effects of colonization. Through discussion of *p'madaziwin*, both as a way in which individuals sought the Good Life, and as a key unifying force, the reader has been offered a more full sense of how community is perceived among Ojibwa people, and what these perceptions imply for concepts of justice and healing. Such insight, it is hoped, will have helped the reader in developing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of abuse and healing in Hollow Water and a perspective from which to consider the following chapters on offenders victims and CHCH.

CONCLUSION

From their the earliest contact Aboriginal and European people have encountered differences in behaviour stemming from differences in perceptions and presuppositions. Some of these differences in ways of being are obvious, palpable, others permeate like smoke — sensed yet not easily grasped.

Greater congruency in behaviour does not necessarily mean equally corresponding perception, thinking or valuing. "Indians are still Indians in a psychological sense, whatever the clothes they wear, whatever their occupation, whether they speak English or not, and regardless of race mixture." "That the Cree are increasingly able to act in terms of the non-Indian world does not imply that they are easily able to think in Euro-Canadian terms" And it remains true today that to put new ideas together in new ways is confusing, painful and often, apparently pointless when the new way contradicts the established internal order.

The choice implicit in contact has been for Ojibwa people to make accommodations that were not right for them or to risk further marginalization and disparagement by endeavouring to retain a sense of self

rooted in their own culture and traditions. The same refrain repeats: the native understanding is less substantive, less valid or simply unworkable, therefore, change must be effected. A re-ordering, an internalization of new ways of perceiving, thinking, doing and being must be accommodated. And the dominant society will direct the change.

Hollow Water's CHCH obviously, like all human endeavours, has inconsistencies and imperfections, however, it is vitally important to consider the connections among the low rate of recidivism among its participants and the approach's roots in an Anishnawbe way of being.

The persistence of team members in seeking solutions that do not negate a Ojibwa sense of self and community, coupled with the willingness of key players in the Canadian justice system to try a different way, has relieved some of the disjuncture between that justice system and the needs of Hollow Water. Strengthening the web of community allows healing and moves us toward the resolution of hurt, grief and anger.

The author gratefully acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Dr. Anne Brydon of the University of Western Ontario.

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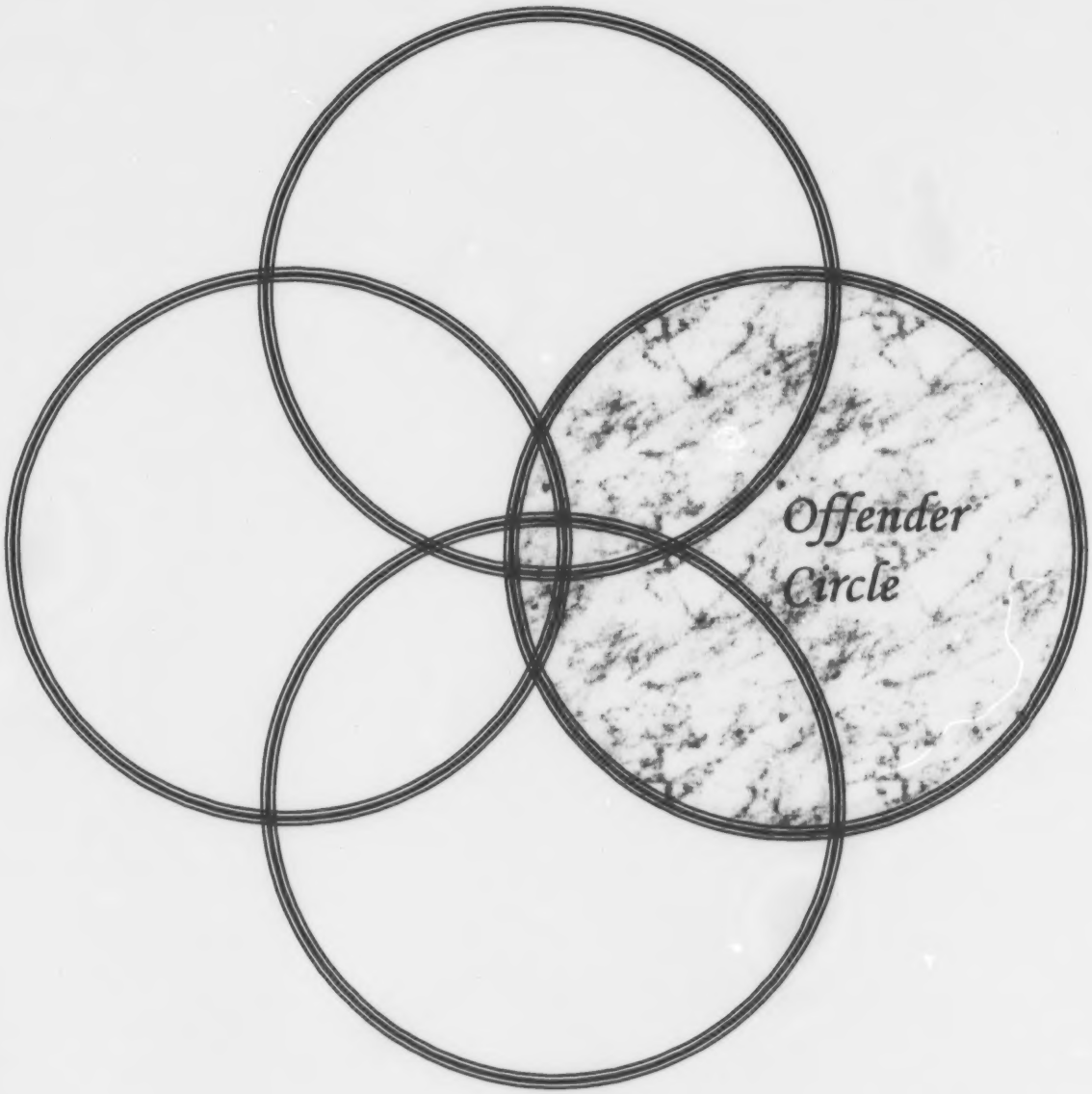
Offender
Circle

Treatment Of Sexual Offenders: Current Approaches With Non-Aboriginals And Their Relevance For Aboriginal Offenders

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Sexual offending is a widespread problem throughout the Western world. In Canada a woman is sexually assaulted every seven minutes and as many as one in four girls and one in eight boys are sexually molested at some time during their childhood. There is not, of course, one offender for every victim. In fact, the majority of sexual offenders either repeatedly abuse the same victim (typical of incest offenders) or they assault several victims over the course of their offending career.

These assaults, whether the victims are adults or children, typically involve quite intrusive sexual behaviours and are commonly associated with the use of violence, force, or coercion of one kind or another. It is also not uncommon, particularly in the rape of an adult, for the offender to deliberately engage in behaviours that are intended to humiliate and degrade the victim. The offenders, however, characteristically minimize these elements (i.e. force, coercion, threats, humiliation, and the intrusiveness of the sexual acts) claiming to have either not committed any offense ("I did nothing, I wasn't there at the time", or "she/he was consenting") or not to have done as much as the victim claims (I only touched her/him over his clothing" "I would never force anyone to have intercourse"). Others attempt to shift responsibility to either someone else ("It was the victim's fault because she was sexually teasing me") or some factor outside themselves ("It was the alcohol that made me do it").

Sexual offenders use various tactics to get access to a victim. Many child molesters, for example, entice children by becoming their friend and confidant. These offenders typically play on the problems children have with their parents (or if it is a father who is offending then he will denigrate the mother), and they make themselves out to be much more sympathetic and more relaxed about

discipline. They often play games with a child in order to "accidentally" touch the child's private parts to see how the child responds. If the child does not insist that he stop, the offender will increase the intrusiveness of his touching until it becomes explicitly sexual. Offenders may give the child gifts, introduce sexual matters into their conversations, allow the child access to pornography, or check the child when he/she is in bed. Many use threats and some are forceful and physically abusive of the child either during the sexual contacts or at other times in order to intimidate the victim. Rapists use somewhat different strategies but all are similarly designed to both give them access to victims and the keep the victim quiet.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS

ADULT MALE SEXUAL OFFENDERS

There are no obvious features of sexual offenders that would allow us to readily distinguish them from other people except, of course, their offensive behaviour. Nevertheless, various people expect, and sometimes even demand, that experts in this field will be able to provide a profile of a sexual offender. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of some to provide such a profile, this is not possible. The current state of our knowledge about sexual offenders is not extensive but even with more information it is unlikely we will ever be in a position to describe the typical characteristics of sexual offenders since there do not appear to be any. In fact, the most important thing to know about sexual offenders is that they are a heterogeneous group.

For example, some come from poor background, some from the middle-class, and others are wealthy. In a British study of members of a pedophile group, it was found that 38% were professionals, 34% were employed in white collar jobs, 14% were tradesmen and the rest either did not provide information or were unemployed. In addition, it is apparent that some sexual offenders are members of minority groups but most belong to society's predominant groups. Reporting, and the subsequent investigative and judicial processes, tend to be biased toward identifying and incarcerating those sexual offenders who come from either lower income or minority backgrounds, but this should not be taken as evidence that such groups produce more sexual offenders.

Experience in outpatient clinics, where many clients who have not been officially identified appear for assessment and treatment, suggests that sexual offenders

come from all walks of life. Anonymous surveys of university students, for example, have revealed that 30% or more report having used force to get a woman to comply with their sexual demands and almost 20% admit to having sexually abused a child. These facts are alarming and they clearly suggest that sexual offending is not restricted to any one group in society.

Perhaps the only obvious feature of sexual offenders is that by far the majority are males. Although in recent years more female offenders have been identified, most clinics (whether community or prison based) still report that over 90% of their sexual offender clients are male. Any theory that hopes to explain sexual offending, then, will certainly have to address this issue. Not surprisingly, it has been found that many sexual offenders hold attitudes and beliefs that are consistent with notions of male privilege and that support the use of violence. However, these attitudes and beliefs also characterize many non-offending males and appear to reflect the predominant views of our societies. These views not only justify sexual offending, they also appear to make its occurrence more likely. Given these observations perhaps it is no surprise that males are the predominant gender group among sexual offenders.

Researchers have examined numerous features thought by one or another theorist, to typify sexual offenders. Although many issues have been evaluated none have revealed obvious differences between sexual offenders and others. This means that anyone attempting to protect themselves or their children from sexual abuse would not be readily able to identify a potential offender. In fact worse than that the majority of sexual offenders put people at ease by virtue of their apparent normality. This is not to say that researchers have entirely failed to find differences between sexual offenders and others. Indeed, they have. It is just that these differences are in most cases rather small and there is a lot of overlap between groups of sexual offenders and non-offenders.

For example, in terms of their capacity to be empathic toward other people in general, male sexual offenders have in some studies appeared to be deficient relative to other males. These group differences, however, were small and many of the sexual offenders' expressed more empathy than did the average non-offender. Thus, most sexual offenders would not seem to be any less compassionate than others, and, of course, we all know, or have known, unempathic people who were not sexual offenders. Once again the important point is that there are no easily recognizable features that would tell us that a person is a sexual offender. Unfortunately the most apparently trustworthy, and seemingly nice person, may be a sexual offender just as most obnoxious or nice people are not sexual offenders.

In reading the following descriptions of the main features that have been found to distinguish sexual offenders, it is very important to keep these observations in mind. That is, while differences have been discerned between sexual offenders and others on these features, the differences are not strong and they will not help anyone (professional or otherwise) recognize a sexual offender. The truth is the only way we can be sure someone is a sexual offender is if they either admit it or the evidence against them is convincing. In treatment it is necessary to operate on the assumption that all convicted sexual offenders are guilty no matter how adamantly they deny it. Some therapists make the mistake of being won over by the convincing, and prosocial, way a denier presents himself. In these cases the counsellor or therapist cannot appropriately challenge the views of the offender because the therapist either believes the man to be innocent or is not steadfast enough in his/her resolve about the offender's guilt to offer convincing challenges. Such a position does not help the offender deal with the issues that caused him to offend and, thereby, does little to reduce the likelihood that the man will offend again. The appearance of normality is essentially a characteristic feature of sexual offenders but this should not encourage those who work with these men to treat them as though they were either innocent or not in need of treatment.

The features that do seem to be relevant in understanding either how it is that someone gets to be a sexual offender, or what it is that allows them to continue to abuse others when they know the abuse is wrong, include factors from their family background, aspects of their personal and interpersonal style, and lifestyle habits.

Family background

There appears to have been more disruptions of one kind or another in the childhood of men who grow up to be sexual offenders. In many cases, sexual offenders report their parents to have been either physically, sexually, or emotionally abusive. Others describe their parents as emotionally indifferent or rejecting. In most studies over half the sexual offenders claimed to have been sexually abused as a child, in some cases by their parents and in other cases by another relative, a family friend, or in few cases, by a stranger. However, it is rare that independent corroboration is available to help us decide whether the offender's account is true or not.

In one study, for example, groups of sexual offenders were interviewed about their possible history of being sexually victimized as a child. Half the group were

interviewed in the usual way while the other half were told they would subsequently be given a lie detector test and if they were found to be lying they would be returned to prison. Sixty seven percent of those who were assessed in the usual way reported being sexually abused as a child whereas of those who were facing the prospect of doing a lie detector test only 29% claimed to have been victimized. While these results make it clear that we cannot rely on the reports of sexual offenders, they also strongly suggest that a disproportionate number of sexual offenders were abused as children since among normal males only about 10 -15 % report being child victims of sexual abuse. The same essentially is true of the other reported damaging features of the childhood of sexual offenders.

In so far as sexual offenders have had disruptive childhoods, it is understood that these experiences create a vulnerability in them that is manifest in various ways. They may be angry about their childhood and they may either internalize this and experience self-denigration and low self-esteem, or they may externalize it and be hostile and aggressive toward others. In any event, most children who experience poor parenting grow up lacking in self-confidence and in the skills necessary to meet their needs in prosocial ways, and they harbour a variety of residual emotional difficulties that remain unresolved. These problems (i.e. low self-confidence, lack of skills, and unresolved emotional issues) interfere with effective social and interpersonal functioning and are functionally related to the offending propensities of sexual offenders. Treatment for these offenders should include an opportunity to address these issues.

Personal and interpersonal style

Much of the research aimed at examining the personal characteristics of sexual offenders has used one or another measure of personality. Most of these studies have either found no differences between sexual offenders and other men, or they have found small differences that do not appear to be clinically meaningful. For example, using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) researchers have in some studies found nothing of any consequences while in other studies the sexual offenders scored higher on some scales suggesting to the researchers that the offenders were more disturbed than their normal controls. However, closer examination of these results indicates that despite scoring higher than the normal group, the sexual offenders still scored within the normal range. This reveals that the observed differences are not clinically meaningful because essentially both groups (i.e. the sexual offenders and the non-offender males) had normal personalities with the sexual offender simply lying toward the top end of the normative range. Thus sexual offenders

do not seem to have abnormal personalities. There are, however, other features of their personal functioning that have been found to differentiate sexual offenders from other males.

As we noted it can be expected from their childhood experiences, that sexual offenders will have low self-esteem and will lack skills in social and interpersonal functioning. Research has found that sexual offenders do indeed lack self-confidence and there is some support for deficits in general social skills. For example, many child molesters, in particular, are unassertive and somewhat passive being easily led and readily taken advantage of by others. This, however, typically makes them feel resentful and somehow entitled to make themselves feel better at the expense of others. Rapists, on the other hand, are more likely to be hostile toward others and to particularly blame women for their problems.

While sexual offenders do not appear to be remarkably unempathic toward most people, recent research has suggested that they may specifically lack feelings of concern toward women and children who have been sexually abused. Most particularly they seem to lack empathy toward their own victims. This, however, may not be so much an empathy deficit as a product of their distorted perceptions concerning the harm their victims might have suffered. Such distorted perceptions, which are quite broad-based among sexual offenders, are self-serving in the sense that they exclude them from any responsibility for the distressful consequences that their victims might experience. These distortions, unfortunately, allow sexual offenders to continue to abuse others by ignoring or denying any ill-effects of their abuse. Such twisted ways of viewing their own behaviour and the responses (present and potential future responses) of their victims include, for example, minimizing the extent and nature of their actual abuse (e.g. denial of penetration or use of force or coercion) and attributing responsibility to the victim, or to someone else (e.g. "My wife was not a good sexual partner"), or to something outside themselves (e.g. "I was drunk at the time"). In addition, sexual offenders hold views that justify their behaviour.

For example, most rapists hold pro-rape attitudes (e.g. women secretly enjoy being raped; women who are victims of rape are more to blame than the offender) and attitudes of male privilege (e.g. "If I want to have sex then my partner should comply even if she does not want to" and "If she refuses I am entitled to rape her or some other woman"). They also consider it appropriate to use force to either get what they want whether it be sex or whatever else, and they think that it is a least occasionally necessary to use some degree of violence to keep women in their place.

The reader will note that many of these distorted perceptions and inappropriate views of women and children and the use of violence, are not restricted to sexual offenders. Indeed, research has revealed that an unfortunate number of apparently normal men hold similar views. Among sexual offenders, however, these views and perceptions are functionally related to their offense proclivities and must, therefore, be challenged and hopefully altered by treatment.

An important feature of sexual offenders is their inability to meet their needs in prosocial ways. Their lives are unsatisfying to them so they turn to inappropriate ways to obtain satisfaction without quite knowing what it is they are seeking and without, unfortunately, any real concern for how their actions affect others. Sexual behaviour among humans serves a multitude of needs over and above the obvious physical gratification. Sex not only results in orgasmic release, it also comforts us, serves to reduce distressing emotions, makes us feel wanted and loved, and reassures us when other people have treated us badly. Most of all, perhaps, sex helps to meet our need for intimacy. These are but some of the needs that are met in sexual behaviour although it is important to point out that few people clearly identify the various needs they are attempting to meet in sexual activities. When these needs are not met in the usual adult relationships, men seek other sexual outlets in an often vain attempt to obtain full satisfaction.

Of course, not all frustrated men commit sexual offenses; some pursue an endless succession of extramarital affairs or one-night stands. But some do, unfortunately, attempt to meet their needs, of which they may be only vaguely aware, by sexually offending. It is important for sexual offenders to learn to recognize the needs they seek in sexual activities so that they can see that offending cannot possibly meet, except in a less than satisfactory way, these needs.

For example, if a child molester is attempting to meet his intimacy needs by having sex with a child, he needs to understand that while this may provide him with some degree of sexual satisfaction, and some comfort as well a meeting to some degree his needs for physical contact, such an unequal power relationship can never satisfy his intimacy needs.

The same is true for rapists who attempt to meet their needs through forced non-consensual sex. Consequently sexual offenders gain some degree of satisfaction on several fronts by their abusive behaviour but never gain anything like full satisfaction. Such a state of affairs (i.e. some but far less than full

satisfaction) represents precisely the sort of conditions that produce persistent behaviours; in this case persistent offending.

In recent years research has revealed that sexual offenders characteristically suffer from a significant lack of intimacy in their lives, although some appear superficially to have intimate relationships. In this sense it is possible, if generally unlikely, that the offender's partner may feel satisfied but he may not. Most sexual offenders either lack the skills and confidence necessary to achieve intimacy although some seem to adopt a style that precludes intimacy even though they may have the requisite skills.

For example, we have had offenders who spend many hours away from their partner ostensibly because they are busy at work or are doing good deeds in the community or are active in social, church or leisure functions. However, on closer examination these activities away from the home, or apart from their adult partner, are often avoidance tactics meant to reduce having to deepen their romantic or marital relationships.

The reciprocal of intimacy (i.e. what people experience when intimacy is low) is emotional loneliness which, it is important to note, should be distinguished from being alone. Indeed, loneliness is very often experienced more acutely when in the company of others than it is when a person is alone. In fact, men who lack intimacy in their lives are characteristically more afraid of being alone (i.e. without a partner) than are men who have intimacy partly at least because they are afraid people will judge them to be inadequate if they are not involved in a relationship. Emotional loneliness, so the research tells us, is one of the most significant factors related to the abuse of others, and sexual offenders have been found to be significantly emotionally lonely.

The achievement of intimacy, or the failure to achieve it, is primarily a function of the individual's attachment style, his degree of self-confidence, and the degree of compatibility between himself and his partner. Sexual offenders have serious deficits in self-confidence and rarely concern themselves about their possible compatibility with a potential partner. Like many men they tend to chose a partner on the basis of superficial features (e.g. looks, availability, vulnerability, etc.) rather than on the basis of personal features that may lead to a long-term enjoyable partnership. Research has shown that most, but not all, sexual offenders have deficient attachment styles. Attachment styles vary with a secure style being characterized by self-confidence and a belief that most other people are decent and trustworthy. Such beliefs engender good relationships with compatible partners and result in the achievement of satisfactory levels of

intimacy. Insecure attachment styles are displayed by people who either lack self-confidence, or do not trust others, or who neither trust others nor respect themselves. These sorts of attitudes cause the person to distrust or avoid intimacy because they fear rejection or expect their partner to be unfaithful.

Sexual offenders also tend, at least with respect to their offensive behaviour but often in more general ways, to be impulsive. They frequently act in response to immediate desires with little thought (except perhaps after the act) for future consequences. They often describe themselves during the actual process immediately prior to and during their offenses, as functioning as though they were in a trance-like state. In fact, they have adopted (whether consciously or not) a state of mind that suspends concern for anything but the immediate circumstances and their own immediate desires.

This has been described as a "cognitively deconstructed" state, and it is a state of functioning that characteristically occurs whenever someone is engaging in a behaviour that they at other times realize is destructive to either themselves or others, or both. This state is self-induced by drug addicts and various others who engage in unacceptable behaviours including sexual offenders, and it allows the person to suspend judgments about anything except the pursuit of their momentary desires.

Another personal feature that appears to be common among sexual offenders is the presence of persistent desires and fantasies that reflect the types of offenses they commit. For example, some child molesters report having repeated fantasies about sex with children and some rapists report fantasizing about rape. This is not, of course, at all surprising. Whether or not such fantasies reflect preferences for the deviant behaviours is not quite so clear. In order to pursue this possibility, psychologists have developed a sexual preference test that involves measuring the man's erections while he views, or listens to, depictions of various sexual partners or acts (both deviant and appropriate partners or behaviours). If the man shows equal or greater arousal to deviant acts or partners than he does to appropriate sexual depictions, then he is said to have deviant sexual preferences. While there is some disagreement about precisely what this test does measure, if a man is more aroused by children or by rape under the rather inhibiting circumstances of the assessment procedure, then most people would conclude that he has a problem and that this is related to his offending.

Certainly an offender who says he repeatedly has deviant fantasies that he feels powerless to stop, needs help to eliminate these fantasies. Some of these men

who report frequent deviant fantasies may have disturbed levels of sex steroids (e.g. higher than normal levels of testosterone) which are thought to activate sexual behaviour and possibly aggression. Experience suggests that very few sexual offenders are hormonally disturbed (i.e. have higher than usual levels of sex steroids) with somewhere between 5-10% at most showing elevated levels of testosterone. In those cases of frequent deviant fantasies, then, some medical evaluation and treatment may be necessary.

Finally, on this issue of personal characteristics, it is important to note that very few sexual offenders (less than 5%) suffer from any serious psychiatric disorders that would require medical attention. However, in those who do have serious additional problems referral to a psychiatrist would be essential. It is very difficult to treat someone for sexual problems when that person is also seriously disturbed in other ways so the first step would require that his other problems be treated.

Lifestyle

Many sexual offenders use alcohol (and sometimes other drugs) to induce a state in themselves that sets aside a concern for society's rules. In a sense this facilitates the cognitively deconstructed state referred to above but intoxication also serves to disinhibit any restraints the offender might otherwise have about sexual abuse and it also may give the offender the "courage" (as he might put it) to abuse. For some offenders this use of alcohol (or another drug) may be a chronic habit independent of offending and such chronic use of alcohol has been shown to erode concerns about all manner of social prohibitions. Of course once sexual abuse commences feelings of guilt or fear of being detected will facilitate further alcohol or drug use and this may escalate into addiction. Alternatively, prolonged addictions so wears away social restraints that sexual offending may occur as part of a more general breakdown in appropriate behaviour.

Some sexual offenders, more characteristically rapists than child molesters, are essentially criminals who among their general disregard for the rights of others, offend sexually. These life-style offenders, then, have more generally criminal attitudes and beliefs; some, indeed, are so unconcerned about others that they can accurately be described as "psychopaths" (i.e. people who are exclusively self-centred, self-serving, and sensation seeking). However, although sexual offending certainly requires the suspension of concern for the victims, few sexual offenders are so globally unempathic to be accurately classified as psychopathic. For example, among sexual offenders in Canadian penitentiaries only 12% were found to meet the criteria for psychopathy.

As mentioned earlier, some sexual offenders spend many hours away from their adult partners in order to avoid intimacy. They may work long hours or spend extra time in church or other socially approved pursuits. These activities seem to engender a sense of entitlement in these men such that they consider their offending to be justified rewards for their otherwise exemplary behaviour.

Similarly, some sexual offenders set very high standards for themselves in most aspects of their lives. They may try to live up to idealistic ethical or religious standards which few if any people could meet. To some extent their long hours of work, or their efforts to do good deeds, or their unrealistic attempts to meet idealistic standards, can be seen as a way of compensating to themselves for the fact that they commit sexual offenses. But whatever the motivation behind these and other ways of producing lifestyle imbalances, the resulting imbalances produce an irresistible desire for and justification of, the secret and forbidden satisfactions of sexual offending. Consequently these lifestyle imbalances need to be corrected in treatment.

Sexual offenders, like most other offenders, all too frequently have jobs that are below their actual potential. This is primarily because their educational attainment is well below their intellectual capacity. Criminals (including sexual offenders) have much the same levels of intellectual functioning as do other people but their level of education is far below that of the general community. This, no doubt, causes them to feel dissatisfied and affects their self-confidence. Unfortunately most of them accept that their educational attainment reflects their true abilities when in the majority of cases it does not. Increasing the educational qualifications of sexual offenders can enhance their self-confidence directly but it can also indirectly improve their self-image by allowing them to improve their occupational status and thereby generating greater financial stability and status.

FEMALE SEXUAL OFFENDERS

In recent years it has become increasingly obvious that there are far more female sexual offenders than was previously thought to be the case. However, it is as well to keep in mind that although there are now substantially more female offenders they still constitute a small percentage (perhaps 5-10% at the most) of the total number of offenders. Nevertheless there are sufficient numbers to justify treatment programs developing an approach to accommodate these women. Some of these female offenders are, in fact, the accomplices of male

offenders and in those cases sexual offender specific treatment may not be necessary although quite obviously some form of treatment is.

Female sexual offenders appear to have been far more often the childhood victims of sexual or physical abuse (95% of female offenders were sexually abused as children in one study). They have a history of sexual promiscuity as teenagers and an associated high rate of anti-social behaviour neither of which is uncommon among female child abuse victims. They tend to neglect their own children and are typically social isolates who use sex to get attention and approval. Female offenders have extensive emotional problems particularly depression, anger, suicidal ideation, and they are frequently substance abusers (more often non-alcoholic drugs).

Female offenders engage in a broad range of sexual activities with their victims including oral-genital sex, digital penetration, and intercourse. Their victims include both boys and girls, with girl victims outnumbering boys in some studies. Some molest their own children, others molest children they are babysitting, and others offend against the children of friends or neighbours.

While treatment approaches, and assessment procedures have essentially been much the same with female as with male sexual offenders, the approach to treatment has been somewhat modified in most programs to suit the needs of these females. For example, female offenders are not as frequently aggressive as are male offenders and many experience very significant guilt feelings. Also fears of rejection by friends, family and the community are, if anything, even greater among female offenders. Nevertheless, the overall approach to assessment and treatment is similar.

JUVENILE SEXUAL OFFENDERS

In the past decade it has become increasingly obvious that juvenile sexual offenders constitute an important and apparently growing problem. It has been concluded, for example, that many of the sexual acts between children, where one is the instigator or aggressor, are not, as had been previously surmised, benign. Earlier analyses held that such behaviours were a sign of normal curiosity or experimentation. When there was clear evidence of coercion, it was thought that the instigator would simply grow out of it. It is now clear that many of these acts represent sexual assault and it is assumed that without treatment many of these young offenders will continue to abuse others and ultimately become adult sexual offenders. Adolescents have been identified as sexual

perpetrators in as many as 20% of rapes and 30% of child molestations. Treatment for these young offenders, then, is now seen as essential.

The majority of these juvenile offenders have characteristics that are quite similar to adult offenders. A significant number display behavioural problems at school and/or learning disabilities, and 30% are involved in other delinquent acts. The majority (almost 90%) are male. Family problems are quite common although not universal. In one study 60% of these juveniles engaged in sexual acts that involved penetration and almost 40% used physical force to get the victim to comply. Less than 10% of juvenile offenders assault someone older than themselves. Ninety percent of the offenders know the victim quite well. Females are three times more likely than males to be the victims of juvenile offenders.

The content of treatment and assessment for juveniles has been quite similar to that used with adult offenders although the style of treatment has been adapted to the needs of teenagers or prepubescents. Family issues are, for example, far more paramount in dealing with young offenders. Although some programs routinely assess the sexual preferences of juveniles, there are far too many ethical problems with such evaluations with young males that it might be unwise to adopt such an approach.

ASSESSMENT

Assessments are done for several reasons. The primary reason is to provide information prior to treatment so that treatment needs can be identified. The second most important reason for assessment is to provide a basis for determining whether or not treatment has been effective in producing the sort of changes that are expected. For this purpose assessments need to be done both before and after treatment. Assessments may also help inform other agencies (e.g. child protection services, probation and parole services, the courts, the police, etc.) in ways that may assist them in making decisions about the offender. The following descriptions of assessment procedures allows any one of these purposes to be met.

Unless there are abundant funds available (which is rarely true of any programs least of all community-based programs), assessment should be limited to what can reasonably be accomplished. For these reasons, physical and physiological evaluations should either not be done at all or referrals should be made to an appropriate professional only when there are clear signs that a more extensive assessment is necessary. For example, if the offender complains that he has

frequent deviant fantasies or urges that he has trouble controlling. This may indicate either excessive levels of sex steroids (such as testosterone although other hormones may also be implicated) or such strong deviant preferences that specialize additional treatment may be required.

In most community programs there are not the facilities nor the expertise to conduct hormonal assays or to assess sexual preferences (which is typically done by conducting a phallometric evaluation where the man's erectile responses are measured while he watches or listens to various sexual scripts — deviant and non-deviant). In fact, such assessments are rarely required and, as noted, in those rare cases a referral may be valuable.

Assessments can be done by interviews or by having the offenders complete psychological tests. At the end of this chapter we have appended a list of tests that may be used to evaluate various areas of functioning. The problem with most psychological tests is that the prosocial response to each question is rather obvious and sexual offenders have a vested interest in presenting themselves as normal. Consequently the results of such testing, while sometimes revealing valuable information, all too often simply reflect what the man considers to be the "proper" response.

Interviews are an important way to gather a very broad range of information about sexual offenders, although the assessor needs to keep in mind that even in these circumstances sexual offenders will attempt to present themselves in a socially desirable way. However, interviews do often create a sufficiently unstructured format allowing the offender to elaborate his responses in a way that may reveal otherwise hidden beliefs or attitudes or elements of his behaviour that he might otherwise attempt to hide. Such unstructured formats also permit the interviewer to make inferences about the offender's thinking processes and behaviour that might not be possible from responses to tests. The interviewing style should be such that it encourages elaborate responses from the offender while at the same time demanding quite detailed answers to questions.

The issues that need to be pursued include:

- Life history including childhood experiences (abusive and non-abusive experiences), teenage years, educational history, sexual history, occupational history, and friendships throughout their life.
- Emotional problems, anger and hostility, and social difficulties.
- Drug and alcohol history.

- Self-confidence and trust of others.
- Lifestyle — criminal or prosocial, leisure pursuits, workaholic style, involvement in church or social activities, parenting style.
- Attitudes and beliefs particularly about women and children, gender relations, and adult/child relations. Many offenders have a poor sense of personal boundaries and lack the appropriate view of how adults should relate to children.
- Offense history including sexual and non-sexual offenses, the degree of sexual intrusiveness in their offenses, age and gender of victims, use of threats or force, and manipulative or grooming style with victims and others.
- Degree of denial or minimization of offenses, and understanding of victim harm.

If the program wishes to make the information derived from interviews more sophisticated, each of the features of interest can be rated on a scale ranging from, for example, completely absent = 0 to fully present = 5. In this way it is not only easier to identify significant issues, it also permits changes with treatment to be readily determined.

TREATMENT

Treatment for sexual offenders has taken many forms over the years but the predominant psychological approach that has emerged in recent years is **cognitive behavioural therapy**. Cognitive behavioural therapy, as the name suggests, focuses on both the behavioural excesses and deficits that characterize sexual offending, and the cognitions (which include attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, perceptions, and feelings) that support these behaviours. This approach assumes that these behaviours and cognitions have been learned and can, therefore, be unlearned and replaced by behaviours and cognitions that are prosocial. The goals of therapy from the cognitive behavioural perspective, then, are to eliminate deviant thoughts feelings and behaviours, and provide the offender with more effective and acceptable ways of thinking about his world and ways of meeting his needs appropriately with appropriate partners.

While cognitive behavioural programs employ psychological processes to attain the goals of treatment, most practitioners also recognize that some (although fortunately few) offenders require medications to facilitate change. These few offenders (less than 5% in our programs) are those who complain of persistent deviant fantasies and urges and who say they feel they have little control over these desires. In some cases this may be due to elevated levels of one or the

other of the sex steroids (usually testosterone although not always) but can also simply indicate well-entrenched habitual ways of dealing with stress. It is not uncommon for men to respond to stress (or to other negative states) by engaging in sexual behaviour and sexual offenders seem to characteristically use sex as a way of either avoiding facing difficulties or rewarding themselves when they feel entitled. When the problem involves elevated sex steroids some form of anti-androgen (hormonal) treatment is usually needed and this requires the involvement of a psychiatrist. When the problem is habitual, then one of the so-called anti-compulsive drugs (the serotonin re-uptake inhibitors) is the drug of choice. In either case the medication should be seen as serving to facilitate effective responding to the cognitive behavioural program rather than as an alternative treatment.

While many cognitive behavioural programs vary in specific content, there is an agreed upon overall framework. Differences occur in terms of the number of components and the amount of time required for participants to complete each of the treatment components. These differences are usually the result of having to treat differing populations of offenders. For example, it does not make sense to offer exactly the same program to all offenders regardless of their risk to reoffend and regardless of the extent of their treatment needs. Corrections Canada, for example, allocates offenders to differing intensity programs that cater to either those with high risk/high needs, moderate risk/needs, and low risk/needs. This makes treatment both more efficient and more effective. Community programs do not always have this luxury so an open-ended group format is preferable in these circumstances so that offenders can progress at their own rate depending upon their needs.

In open-ended groups each offender progresses at his own pace so that offenders complete the program earlier or later than others. When one offender completes treatment, his place is then taken by another offender which results in all participants being at different stages. While this approach has some advantages, most therapists prefer closed groups where all offenders start and finish at the same time.

The main treatment components, however, seem to be similar in most North American cognitive behavioural treatment programs. Although early approaches to treatment focused largely on decreasing deviant sexual arousal, current practices concentrate on the combined influence of many socio-economic, social, political, behavioural and psychological factors. Lowering deviant sexual arousal is still considered a part of many cognitive behavioural programs but most current programs target other critical issues such as, changing cognitive

distortions, improving social skills and confidence, and enhancing appropriate sexual interests.

Treatment targets may be separated into two areas: offense specific issues and offense related issues. Offense specific issues include: overcoming denial and minimization, enhancing self-esteem, increasing victim empathy, changing distorted attitudes and beliefs, improving intimacy skills, modifying inappropriate fantasies, and developing a sound relapse prevention plan. It is suggested that the treatment issues be approached in this order because progress in one area may not be possible unless earlier issues have been thoroughly addressed. For example, increasing empathy for the offenders' victim would be difficult if the offender was continuing to deny or minimize the offense. Thus, each component of treatment is related to each other and often issues from previous components are raised again in subsequent components. It should be emphasized that as treatment progresses significant areas for each offender are repeatedly confronted within various frameworks. The interconnection of all the treatment issues should be emphasized to the offenders.

Offense related targets include the precursors or influencing factors to an offense such as poor problem solving, lack of communication skills, substance abuse, inadequate life skills, and limited anger control. There are, of course, other related factors that may be relevant to specific individuals. Within institutional settings these issues are typically addressed in other available programs such as Cognitive Skills, Anger Management and Substance Abuse. However, if no such programs are available these issues need to be addressed within the framework of the sexual offender treatment program in addition to the offense specific issues.

The offense specific issues are those that need to be addressed for all offenders. The following represents a rather brief summary of the features of each of these issues and the typical approach to treatment within each component.

DENIAL AND MINIMIZATION

Denial of an offense may be expressed as a refusal to admit that any type of offense has been committed, a claim that a sexual interaction occurred but that it was consensual, or an insistence that "something" may have happened but the offender is certainly not a "sexual offender" and consequently does not need treatment. Minimization is characterized by refusing to accept responsibility for the offense, denying that the victim suffered any harm or limiting the degree, extent, frequency or intrusiveness of the offense. Although denial has often

been considered one of the greatest stumbling blocks to effective treatment, targeting these issues should be a fundamental first step in order to augment motivation for treatment. If deniers and minimizers are excluded from treatment programs it is likely that many offenders who may have the greatest needs will not receive treatment. Thus it is the therapists' responsibility to overcome these barriers by convincing offenders they are in need of, and will benefit from, a treatment program. In fact, denial and minimization should be expected among sexual offenders given the effects on them that result from the usual abhorrence most people display toward sexual offenders.

As an initial component of treatment the offender is required to disclose to the entire treatment group his version of the sexual assault. The essential features of a disclosure involve a description of the details of the offense, the offender's thoughts and emotions at the time, and his interpretation of the victim's behaviour, thought and feelings during and after the offense. Disclosures should also include any relevant circumstances that may have preceded the offense, the offender's drug and alcohol use at the time, and any pertinent thoughts and feelings in the period leading up to the crime. The therapist should outline the advantages of "coming clean" (e.g. feeling a sense of relief; having the opportunity to address a wide range of problems) and beginning a process that will eventually lead to a better life. The therapist should also indicate the disadvantages to the offenders of continuing to deny their offense (e.g. being excluded from the group; likely rejection from his family or other community members; eventual re-offending and resultant long-term jail sentence). It is always important to emphasize the positive reasons for remaining in treatment that are relevant to the offender himself.

During each offender's disclosure other group members are encouraged to challenge any statements they do not accept. The therapist models supportive challenges and provides feedback to the group members on their comments. The intention here is to foster, from the outset, a climate in the group that assists the offenders to face difficult issues in an honest way while at the same time being supportive and encouraging of each other. Offenders should be dealt with in a respectful but firm manner. In order to change, offenders need to be encouraged to believe that they are worthy of change and capable of doing so.

The therapists' challenges should be based on an official account and on the victim's version of events. External corroborating information such as police reports, victim statements, or written descriptions of court proceedings are vital to credible challenges. It is the responsibility of the group to illustrate to the offender the way in which he manipulated his victim and circumstances in order

to gain access to, and ensure secrecy in, his victims. Comments and challenges made by other group members frequently reveal to the therapist important information about the minimizations and rationalizations of these other offenders. If participants refrain from challenging another group member, or are collusive with the disclosing offenders' rationalizations, the opportunity to challenge them will be missed. Thus all group members must be encouraged to challenge one another.

Although the disclosure and challenging component of treatment is intended to reduce minimizations and rationalizations, subsequent components of treatment continue to tackle this issue throughout the program.

Enhancing Self-Esteem

The self-esteem section of treatment involves a number of elements. Two specific features encourage or discourage the development of a sense of self-worth in the offenders: the therapists style and the characteristics of the setting. In this respect the setting refers to the immediate circumstances of treatment and the way in which other staff in the setting respond to the offenders, but it should also include, in small communities, the other members of the community. Other staff need to behave respectfully toward these clients and, if possible, the community should also be encouraging to offenders who are seeking treatment. For Aboriginal programs the band council and the Elders would form a critical part of this approach and they should encourage other community members to be supportive.

In some programs a confrontational style has been popular when dealing with clients who evoke public disapproval (i.e. alcoholics, drug addicts, all criminals, and particularly sexual offenders). However, research has demonstrated that confrontational approaches fail to produce the desired changes in therapy, particularly if the client has low self-esteem. Instead, the therapist should attempt to adopt a empathic, warm, genuine and respectful approach to clients. This should be underscored by a therapeutic style that makes the client feel accepted, rewarded and encouraged. It should be remembered that therapists serve not only to develop change in the participants, they also model behaviour and attitudes whether they intend to or not. It is, therefore, critical for therapists to be respectful, empathic and confident, if they want their clients to adopt these characteristics. Clients will characteristically do as you do, rather than as you say, if your behaviour does not match what you say.

It is important, within this process, to make it clear that it is the person as a whole who is accepted and not the harmful behaviour in which they have engaged. Offenders needs to understand that while they have behaved in an unacceptable and harmful way, their behaviour does not define them as a person. They are not a "sexual offender" in that their sexual offense is not the defining feature of their personality; rather they are a person who has engaged in a variety of "good" and "bad" behaviours, including the sexual offense.

The therapist then also distinguishes between guilt and shame. Guilt is an emotional response that may motivate change, while shame is a self-blaming response that declares the person to be worthless and, therefore, incapable of change. Group members are encouraged to be appropriately self-congratulatory and to reinforce themselves for gains and progress in treatment or in other areas of their lives. For those people who are particularly negative toward others, the therapist should point out that often individuals who make derogatory remarks about others have low self-esteem themselves. Accordingly, the therapist recommends to all group members that they adopt a respectful and positive style toward others.

Group participants are encouraged to maintain or improve their appearance and self-presentation, to upgrade their education and occupational skills, to expand their range of healthy activities, and to increase the range and frequency of social activities. All of these changes have been shown to increase a sense of self-worth.

Finally, a good exercise for increasing self-esteem is to have each offender create a list of eight to ten positive self-statements. These statements should reflect optimistic and attractive (although not necessarily remarkable) features about themselves. The participants are instructed to read the statements three different times each day for three weeks. This simple exercise has been shown to increase self-esteem.

Enhancing Empathy

Empathy training is routinely seen as a major component in most sexual offender programs. Often offenders have learned to suppress their feelings and many find it difficult to express emotions. An initial step in treatment is to train the offenders in emotional expression. Participants may describe an event from their past that they found emotionally distressing. These experiences commonly describe losing a loved one, the break-up of an important relationship, or the experience of rejection and abuse by their parents or other guardians. In this

segment some group members will describe being sexually assaulted as a child which often has a notable effect on the other group members. Since they by this stage know each other well, the impact on their perspective of their own offending behaviour from hearing about the sexual abuse of a fellow offender is quite strong.

Once the offender has described his upsetting experience other participants have the opportunity to report how the description made them feel. The group then discusses the adequacy of the targeted members' emotional expression and the therapist provides feedback on each participant's response. The group is told that by communicating the emotions they felt when listening to another person's story, each participant is displaying empathy toward the person who described the experience. If an offender is inordinately distressed by discussing a personal experience, additional counselling should be arranged to help him deal with this issue.

During the next exercise either a videotape or a written account of the experiences of a sexual assault victim is shown to the group. Each individual describes how he felt during the victim's narration. This stimulates a general discussion in which each offender is required to recount the immediate (during the offense), post-assault and long term effects of sexual abuse. Then each participant, keeping in mind the group-generated list of the effects of sexual abuse, describes his offense from the victim's point of view. The importance of this exercise is to have the offenders recognize the emotions of their victims by attempting to experience their distress. They are encouraged to consider the offense from a very different viewpoint and in a depth they have likely not experienced previously. It is emphasized that the offender may not have realized at the time of the offense how much the victim was suffering. For example, the victim may have been too frightened to react or show any emotions, or the offender may have been so absorbed in fulfilling his own goal that he did not notice the victim's distress.

As the last element in the victim empathy training section the participants are required to write two letters, one supposedly from the victim, and the other as a response to the victim (with instructions not to send the letter). The letter from the victim should include an expression of all the anger, self-blame, loss of trust, and the various other emotional, cognitive and behavioural problems, that are common effects of sexual abuse. The letter to the victim confirms her/his right to be angry, expresses an understanding of the consequences the victim has had to suffer, and provides the offender with an opportunity to communicate his acceptance of full responsibility for the offense. The participants are expected to

apologize to the victim for the offense but they are not to ask for forgiveness. Offenders are provided with feedback about the adequacy of their letters and may be asked to re-write them until they are acceptable.

ATTITUDE CHANGES

While it is commonly believed that most sexual offenders support beliefs that bolster their offensive behaviour, the research evidence to support this is not strong. This may be because the questionnaires used to evaluate these attitudes are relatively transparent. The offenders are able to discern what is the "correct" response and may deliberately misrepresent their beliefs in an effort to appear pro-social. However, offenders typically verbalize pro-offending attitudes while in treatment. Thus, it appears that many offenders will "reveal" their true beliefs during group, particularly when they are being challenged during their disclosure.

Rapists accept a variety of myths about women's sexuality and desires, and about the act of rape itself. These offenders also believe women should take a subservient role to men and that aggression toward women is acceptable. Similarly, child molesters embrace pro-offending views of children and of sexual molestation. These views include permissive attitudes toward sexual relationships between adults and children and interpreting children as less threatening, less dominating, and easier to relate to than adults. Offense-supportive attitudes and beliefs are challenged throughout treatment whenever they arise in discussions. However, these types of cognitive distortions are also directly targeted in the attitude change component of treatment.

The offenders describe their beliefs about women and children and their sexual nature. The therapist also describes hypothetical situations which portray the offender in a way that may be (incorrectly) interpreted as being less responsible. In these cases the victim's behaviour may be interpreted, by an offender with pro-offending attitudes, as inviting the sexual assault. When such offense-supportive attitudes are revealed they are challenged by the therapist and, hopefully, by other group members. Implications for the offender, if he maintains his offense-supportive beliefs, are reviewed and pro-social alternatives offered. This attempt at "cognitive restructuring" is, as previously mentioned, continued throughout treatment by incorporating these types of challenges into every component of the program.

INTIMACY TRAINING

Evidence suggests that sexual offenders commit sexual assaults not only to meet sexual, aggression and power needs, but also to meet a need for intimacy. Sexual offenders appear unable to effectively meet their intimacy needs in prosocial ways, even when they seem to have reasonably good relations with an adult partner. In these circumstances they seek to obtain satisfaction (although they may not recognize their lack of intimacy) by forcing or manipulating a woman or child into an "intimate" relationship with them. This "intimate" relationship, however, is almost purely sexual as a result of the offender identifying sex with intimacy.

As a first step in treatment the therapist provides the group with information on the nature of intimacy and loneliness while emphasizing the value of deeper intimacy in an individual's life. Intimacy not only produces greater satisfaction in relationships, it also serves to protect people from emotional and physical health problems. People with greater intimacy have less health problems and are far happier and fulfilled than are low intimacy individuals.

The group participants are aided in identifying their existing ability, or inability, to secure intimate relationships. If they identify a deficiency in this area they are encouraged to pursue the origins of that inadequacy. Poor intimacy in adulthood arises primarily, although not exclusively, from inadequate attachment bonds with parents during childhood. These inadequate attachments in childhood serve as a template for relating to others throughout the lifespan and result in unsatisfying adult relationships. Once the origin of intimacy difficulties are revealed offenders are encouraged to attempt to resolve issues related to either their parents or failed early attempts at intimacy.

The next area to be explored with the group is the role of intimacy in sexual relations. Unfortunately, sexual offenders all too often believe that having sex is equivalent to achieving intimacy. The therapist explains that satisfaction in sex is related to all aspects of a relationship. An equitable relationship (where partners treat each other with respect and share in all important decisions) is needed for satisfactory intimacy and for sexual satisfaction to be realized. Thus, forced sex and sex with children can not result in fulfillment of these needs.

Jealousy is a factor that interferes with successful intimacy. Of particular importance is the magnitude of the offenders' response to any real or imagined infidelities by his partner and his tendency to be jealous in inappropriate situations. These responses are characteristically related to low self-esteem, and to the degree of the offenders' own unfaithfulness, as well as his interpretation of the significance of the infidelity. While jealousy may, at times,

be expected or appropriate in instances of actual betrayal, the therapist challenges inappropriate attitudes and helps the offender understand why it is that unfaithfulness occurred in previous relationships. In this way the therapist aims to have the client understand the role his own behaviour played in producing unfaithfulness in his partner so that he can change his future behaviour. Simply blaming the other person does not help in avoiding future difficulties. For example, the offender's emotional distance, his poor communication style, his secretiveness, ar[illegible]ed, his own unfaithfulness, may have influenced his partner's subsequent disloyalty.

Role-playing is used in training offenders in the skills necessary for initiating and maintaining relationships. These skills include, choosing appropriate partners, developing conversational skills, not rushing into relationships, self-disclosure, conflict resolution, expression of feelings, and communication and listening skills. Other issues targeted are destructive attitudes about relationships such as, believing in "love at first sight", and that disagreements within a relationship are catastrophic.

As a final component, loneliness is discussed in terms of the "fear" of being alone. The therapist points out the irrational and self-destructive consequences of this fear. Offenders are required to list the advantages of being alone and why being alone is not always equal to being lonely. Acquiring the self-reliance to enjoy being alone permits offenders to pursue relationships in order to enhance their lives rather than to fill a void they experience when not in a relationship.

DEVIANT FANTASIES

As previously mentioned, in earlier treatment programs deviant sexual preferences were considered one of the main targets of treatment. It was assumed that sexual offenders actually prefer their deviant sexual acts (i.e. forced non-consensual sex or sex with a child) to any other form of sexual behaviour. From this perspective consensual acts with adults were construed as a "cover up" or substitute response in place of the preferred deviant acts. However, the suggestion that preferences are fixed and unvarying is unlikely to be true. In fact, there is nothing to suggest that sexual offenders do not find a variety of sexual acts to be enjoyable. Indeed, the majority of sexual offenders engage in appropriate sexual behaviours far more often than they engage in deviant acts so it seems unlikely that they actually prefer the deviant acts. Deviant sexual behaviour may reflect a search for novelty or it may simply reflect the fact that the individual took advantage of an opportunity and enacted a

behaviour that would otherwise have been low on the offenders' hierarchy of preferences.

Fantasies may meet a variety of needs in the sexual offender. In addition to the sexual features, deviant fantasies often deal with issues of power and control, aggression and the need to humiliate, as well as the need for admiration and respect. These features of deviant fantasies, and the fact that they are entirely private experiences, make them powerfully attractive and often difficult for the offender to resist. Therefore, in treatment sexual offenders are taught procedures to reduce the frequency and attractiveness of these fantasies.

The two primary procedures used in this component are covert sensitization and masturbatory reconditioning. The main goal of covert sensitization is to make the unpleasant consequences of sexual offending foremost in the offenders' thoughts during the early stages of their offense chain. For example, it is hoped that a rapist will stop to consider the negative consequences of offending before he begins the process involved in seeking a victim. By repeatedly associating the negative repercussions of offending with imagining early components in the deviant behaviour chain, it is expected that the inappropriate activities will lose their appeal and consequently the deviant thoughts will diminish in intensity and frequency.

Covert sensitization requires each offender to write a description of three deviant fantasies on pocket-sized index cards. One of these fantasies must describe the full sequence of an actual or typical offense chain (from the first thoughts of offending to the actual crime). The offenders then list on the reverse of the card, all of the possible negative consequences that could result from their offending. The participants are instructed to read the offense sequences first, followed by the consequences, at least three times each day. As treatment progresses the offenders are instructed to begin reading the negative consequences earlier in the fantasy or offense chain. After reading the card (i.e. the offense chain and the consequences) the offender is told to imagine an alternative positive and prosocial response such as becoming involved in an enjoyable alternative (not necessarily sexual) activity.

Masturbatory reconditioning combines both directed masturbation and satiation therapy. The goal of this procedure is to augment the allure of appropriate fantasies by associating them with self-stimulated sexual arousal. As an initial step the client and therapist generate a set of fantasies involving an appropriate partner (either male or female depending on the offenders' sexual orientation). The offenders are instructed to masturbate to orgasm while imagining these

appropriate sexual fantasies. If arousal is difficult to achieve, or begins to diminish, the client is instructed to use deviant fantasies to re-establish arousal. Once arousal has been attained they are to switch back to the appropriate fantasies. Following orgasm males become relatively unresponsive to sexual stimulation. The clients are told that after ejaculation they should stop masturbating and rehearse aloud every variation they can generate on their deviant fantasies for approximately 10 minutes. The goal of this part of the procedure is to associate deviant fantasies with a sexually unresponsive state which should reduce the attractiveness of the deviant thoughts.

Some clients have reported that the preceding techniques are not effective for them. They report that their deviant thoughts are overwhelming and they cannot resist masturbating to them. Consequently they are almost overwhelmed by the desire to re-offend. These are the cases that should be referred for additional help to a psychiatrist in order that he/she can administer either anti-androgen (hormonal) medication or an anti-compulsive drug. Remember, however, that these medications should be used as adjuncts to, rather than replacements for, a comprehensive cognitive behavioural program otherwise the client may not acquire self-directed control over his behaviour. Eventually the client should develop enough coping skills to decrease and eventually stop the medication.

Some other clients, while not overwhelmed by their deviant thoughts, nevertheless are not able or willing to use either covert sensitization or masturbatory reconditioning, because they find the procedure humiliating or degrading. While these objectives can usually be overcome by persuasion, and while client resistance should not always produce an acquiescent response by the therapist, it may be wise to avoid using procedures that alienate clients. We, in fact, have evidence that the rest of our treatment program is sufficient in many cases to eliminate deviant desires and thoughts, and at least two eminent sex therapists (Drs. Gene Abel and William Pithers) have reported similar findings. It may, therefore, be unnecessary to target deviant fantasies in treatment with most offenders and this might be sensible strategy with Aboriginal offenders.

RELAPSE PREVENTION

The relapse prevention section is the final component of offense specific treatment. While programs vary in terms of intensity, extensiveness and time required to complete this component, the basic framework is similar from program to program. Some programs spend a great deal of time teaching their clients the "language" of relapse prevention, but, it seems more reasonable to avoid using technical terms in favour of using everyday language.

Once the offenders have acquired the changes facilitated by the previous components of the treatment program, the relapse prevention element integrates these skills into a self-management plan. The goal of this section is to create a set of plans that help maintain treatment gains after treatment termination.

As a first step the client is required to complete an autobiography. Actually, it is most useful to have clients begin this autobiography shortly after they enter treatment as it often requires repeated modifications. Also completing this early on assists the therapist in better understanding each offender which, of course, allows the therapist to better help the offender. This exercise prompts the offender to consider his past in a way, and at a depth, he has not previously done. The autobiography facilitates the processes necessary to create an offense chain.

The offense chain includes background factors, thinking processes, and action sequences that disinhibit prosocial controls and initiate the steps leading to offending. Background factors are those features that put the offender in a frame of mind or emotional state that makes it more likely that either he will initiate a plan to offend or that he will seize an opportunity to offend that he might otherwise have ignored. Examples of background factors are: distressing childhood experiences, poor lifestyle choices, emotional distress, relationship difficulties, substance abuse, and various sources of stress. Clients identify the pro-offending attitudes, beliefs, cognitive distortions, and deviant thoughts and fantasies that they believe initiate the action sequences leading to an offense.

The action sequences may involve the offender searching for a victim (e.g. driving around aimlessly, or frequenting video arcades or playgrounds), or he may begin to groom a victim and manipulate others in order to create the opportunity to offend. It is important to keep in mind that many of the action sequences are not recognized as such by the offender. He may claim that he did not intend when, for example, he went driving aimlessly, to seek a victim; the victim, he may claim just happened to appear. This expressed view of the offense chain may simply be a deliberate untruth but all too often it represents a self-deluded stance on the part of the offender. When an offender commences a chain of behaviour that leads to an offense, he will typically enter a state known as Cognitive deconstruction. In this state people focus only on the immediate steps of behavioural sequence and suspend any thought about where it will lead or what the eventual consequences for them will be. This allows sexual offenders to construe the offense as something that "just happened" and thereby avoid accepting responsibility for having planned the offense. Apparently sexual

offenders think that if they admit to having planned to offend then they will be judged (both by others and by themselves) to be more deviant than if the offense did, indeed, "just happen". However, adopting this view not only discourages the possibility of changing, it actually makes most people consider the offender to be more dangerous because he will, as a consequence of this perspective, be seen as someone who has no control over his behaviour.

Once the offense chain is produced it is read aloud to the group who offer suggestions for improvement. As a result of this feedback the chain is modified by the client until it is considered satisfactory by everyone in the group. This process typically takes several revisions before a satisfactory offense chain is produced.

The Relapse Prevention Plan is derived from the offense chain. The client identifies factors within the offense chain (both background factors as well as situational opportunities) that are important to re-offending. He then creates a list of strategies for dealing with each of these risk factors. Each offender is required to describe how he will avoid high risk situations in the future and how he will deal with these situations should they arise unexpectedly. Additional alternative strategies should be generated in case the originally planned course of action is not possible. The client also describes how he will respond to pro-offending attitudes or fantasies should these thoughts occur in the future. Indeed, offenders are told that deviant thoughts or urges are certain to occur again particularly when they are under stress, or experiencing negative emotional states. They should, therefore, prepare themselves for these inevitable events and they should not construe them as indicating that they have failed to benefit from treatment. Offenders should be told that the occasional deviant thought is to be expected and should serve as an opportunity to congratulate themselves on the relative absence of such thoughts over the time since treatment ended, and as an opportunity to analyze the circumstances to see what brought on the thought.

As a final step to this component the client is required to generate two lists of warning signs. One list is to alert himself to signs indicating his risk to re-offend is escalating (e.g. having fantasies, urges or deviant thoughts, feeling depressed or low in self-worth), while the other list that warns members of his support group that he may be slipping back into a risky lifestyle (e.g. withdrawing from family members, or drinking).

It is suggested that in addition to the internal management facilitated by the relapse prevention procedures described above a system of external

management should be arranged. The external management includes supervision of the offender by individuals who have agreed to take some responsibility to monitor him and who are made familiar with his relapse prevention plans. During treatment the therapist should assist the offender in identifying an appropriate support group who may assist in this process. Potential support group members include spouses, family members, close friends, employers, and parole or probation officers. All members of the support group receive a copy of the relapse prevention package (offense chain, relapse prevention plans, and warning signs) and recommendations for restrictions on the offenders behaviour. This element of the release plan is meant to expand the efficiency of supervision, create a network to aid overloaded parole and probation officers, and develop a co-operative relationship among the members of the offenders family, friends, and community.

SUMMARY OF TREATMENT

These, then, are the components that are considered essential to the effective treatment of sexual offenders. As we noted earlier, there are other issues (offense related problems) that also need to be dealt with in an effective program for these clients. It may be necessary, for example, for a program to develop strategies to deal with the offenders' own victimization, with his anger, with his drug or alcohol abuse, or with other problems that are related to his offending. It should be kept in mind, however, that the goal of treatment is not necessarily to deal with every problem the offender has in his life. The goal is to ensure that he does not sexually offend again against some innocent victim. However, it is true that the more whole the person is the better able he will be to avoid offending in the future, and the significant advantage of traditional Aboriginal healing programs is that the goal is to make the person "whole again" and to re-integrate him back into a supportive community.

Some of the readings suggested at the end of this chapter describe ways to approach some of the offense related issues, but for many of these procedures the reader will have to pursue the more specific literature (e.g. alcohol treatment programs are not described in any of the books on sexual offender treatment).

APPLICATION TO ABORIGINAL OFFENDERS

Although it seems quite obvious that the programs we have described here, which were developed with offenders of European descent, need to be adapted to the Aboriginal way of life and integrated into the cultural aspects of Aboriginal

life, all too often non-Aboriginal therapists have simply attempted to apply these programs directly to Aboriginal offenders. Until quite recently, for example, treatment programs for sexual offenders in Canadian Penitentiaries were applied to all offenders regardless of their cultural or ethnic background. Corrections Canada is now addressing this problem by piloting Aboriginal-specific programs that have, as one component of a broader Way of Life approach, a sexual offender component that is integrated into the more general program.

Fortunately, because of the relatively smaller size and greater integration of most Aboriginal communities, treatment can be applied not only within traditional approaches but also within the context of the whole community. These features of Aboriginal communities also allow for the diversion of offenders from the prison services to placement in their community where monitoring of their behaviour, to reduce the chances of reoffending, can be more realistically achieved than in non-Aboriginal communities, and, indeed, this is part of the traditional healing approach.

We have read in detail the treatment programs at Hollow Water First Nation and at the Native Clan Organization in Winnipeg. In most respects these programs cover essentially what we have outlined as state-of-the-art for the treatment of non-Aboriginal offenders, although they do so in traditional culturally appropriate ways. Indeed, the integration into traditional approaches of what we have learned over the years with non-Aboriginal offenders has been exemplary in these two programs. The Winnipeg-based program has, however, noted some additional specific features of Aboriginal offenders that should be emphasized in treatment and assessment. For example, they have observed that Aboriginal offenders more frequently display problems of abandonment, displacement, racism, and difficulties with personal identity. They also have more significant histories of being maltreated, by adults when they were children (particularly in the residential schools), and for these Aboriginal offenders alcohol and drug abuse, and poverty, are almost universal. In the Winnipeg program the Aboriginal offenders have longer histories of other criminal activities, and they display more violence in their offenses than do the non-Aboriginal offenders in Winnipeg. Some of these features may, however, be the result of some peculiarities of the group of offenders treated at the Native Clan Organization; for example, there may be a significant number of their clients who are city or peripheral city dwellers. City or peripheral city, dwelling Aboriginals typically are far more subject to direct racism and other forms of rejection by the dominant groups, and are less integrated into the community than are Aboriginals living on more remote reserves. The Native Clan program, in fact, distinguishes Aboriginal offenders in terms of their level of acculturation into the dominant

society and suggests that treatment approaches may have to vary according to the level of acculturation. Nevertheless, there clearly are differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders and these must be addressed in treatment.

The Native Clan Organization's program is clearly closer to the accepted approach used with non-Aboriginal offenders while the Hollow Water program is more traditionally-based. This, however, should not necessarily suggest a difference of opinion in approaches to treatment with Aboriginal offenders. As noted the Winnipeg program operates within a predominantly non-Aboriginal urban community where the offenders will, for the most part, remain, These urban offenders will, the, necessarily have to function within a non-Aboriginal community and must, to some extent at least, be integrated into that community. In more exclusively Aboriginal communities the better approach is the more traditional one.

These comments are not meant to imply that the goals of non-Aboriginal programs are unsuited to dealing with Aboriginal offenders. It seems reasonable to assume, until, and if, there appears clear evidence to the contrary, that the goals of treatment will be the same. It is only the process of treatment that need to be modified to suit Aboriginal offenders.

The real advantage of the Hollow Water program is that it is holistic in the sense of integrating the treatment of the offender and the victim, their families, and the whole community. This, of course, is rarely possible outside a small community, although the tradition of non-Aboriginal responses to sexual abuse is to separate treatment for offenders and victims, and to largely neglect reintegration with the community. In fact, most non-Aboriginal communities are hostile to the reintegration of sexual offenders so perhaps for a change non-Aboriginal people can learn from Aboriginal approaches rather than our traditional strategy of attempting to foist our ways on other people. We are optimistic that Aboriginal programs, at least as exemplified by the Hollow Water and Native Clan approaches, will provide an effective way to deal with the legacy of sexual abuse; a legacy largely inherited from the times when Europeans subordinated every aspect of Aboriginal life. If we have learned anything from the errors of our past it ought to be that Aboriginal peoples should have control over their own destiny and over their own problems. Indeed, we should have the good sense to learn from Aboriginal ways. Certainly their way of dealing with offenders of all types could teach us as much as we are ever likely to teach them.

APPENDIX: ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

SEXUAL ISSUES

Sex Anxiety Inventory - L. H. Janda (1980) Development of a sex anxiety inventory. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 48, 169-175
Clarke Sex History Questionnaire - R. Langevin et al (1990) Clarke Sex History Questionnaire for Males Manual Oakville, Ontario: Juniper Press
Multiphasic Sex Inventory - Dr. Nichols, 437 Bowes Drive, Tacoma, Washington, USA 98466
Sexual Interest Card Sort - Dr. G. Abel, Behaviour Medicine Institute, Atlanta, Georgia, USA 30327-4101

DISTORTED THINKING

Cognitive Distortions Scale - Dr. G. Abel, Behaviour Medicine Institute, Atlanta, Georgia, USA 30327-4101
Bumby Cognitive Distortions Scale - Dr. K. Bumby, Fulton State Hospital, Mail Stop 300, 600 East 5th Street, Fulton, Missouri, USA 65251-1798

ATTITUDES

Attitudes Toward Women Scale - J. T. Spence & R. L. Helmreich (1972) The Attitudes Toward Women Scale: An objective instrument to measure attitudes toward the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. Psychological Documents, 2, 153
Hanson Sex Attitudes Questionnaire - Dr. K. Hanson, Corrections Branch, Ministry Secretariat, Solicitor General of Canada, 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, K1A 0P8
Rape Myth Acceptance Scale - M. R. Burt (1980) Cultural myths and support for rape. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38, 217-230

EMPATHY

Rape Victim Empathy Scale and The Child Molester Victim Empathy Scale - Yolanda Fernandez, Department of Psychology, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6
Interpersonal Reactivity Index - M. Davis (1980) A multidimensional approach to individual differences in empathy. JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 10, 85

SELF-ESTEEM

Rosenburg Self-Esteem Scale - M. Rosenburg (1965) Society and the adolescent self-image Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
Social Self-esteem Inventory - J. S. Lawson, W. L. Marshall & P. McGrath (1979) The Social Self-esteem Inventory, Educational and Psychological Measurement, 39, 803-811

ANGER/HOSTILITY

Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory - A. Buss & A. Durkee (1957) An inventory for assessing different kinds of hostility Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21, 343-349
State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory - Psychological Assessment Resources, P.O. Box 998, Odessa, Florida, USA 33556
Hostility Towards Women Scale - Dr. J. Check, Psychology Department, York University, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario, M3J 1P3

DEPRESSION/ANXIETY

Beck Depression Inventory - The Psychological Corporation, P.O. Box 839954, San Antonio, Texas, USA
Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale and Social Avoidance and Distress Scale - D. Watson & R. Friend (1969) Measurement of Social-evaluative anxiety. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 33, 448-457

DRUG USE

Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test - M. L. Selzer (1971) The Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test: The quest for a new diagnostic instrument American Journal of Psychiatry, 127, 1653-1658
Drug Abuse Screening Test - H. A. Skinner (1982) The Drug Abuse Screening Test, Addictive Behaviour, 7, 363-371

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Clarke Parent Child Relations Questionnaire - Dr. R. Langevin, Juniper Psychological Services and Publications, Dundas Kipling Centre, Suite 200, 5353 Dundas Street West, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9B 6H8

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship Questionnaire - K. Bartholomew & L. M. Horowitz (1991) Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61, 226-244
Miller's Intimacy Scale - R. S. Miller & H. M. Lefcourt (1982) The assessment of social intimacy. Journal of Personality Assessment, 46, 514-518
UCLA Loneliness Scale - D. Russell, L. A. Peplau & C. A. Cutrona (1980) The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39,472-480

SOCIAL SKILLS

Rathus Assertiveness Scale - S. A. Rathus (1973) A 30-item schedule for assessing assertive behavior. Behavior Therapy, 4, 398-406

PERSONALITY

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - J. R. Graham (1993) MMPI-2: Assessing personality and psychopathology New York: Oxford University Press.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Barbaree, H. E., Marshall, W. L., & Hudson, S. M. (1993). *The Juvenile Sex Offenders,* New York: Guilford Press.

Finkelhor, D. (1984). *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory And Research,* New York: Free Press.

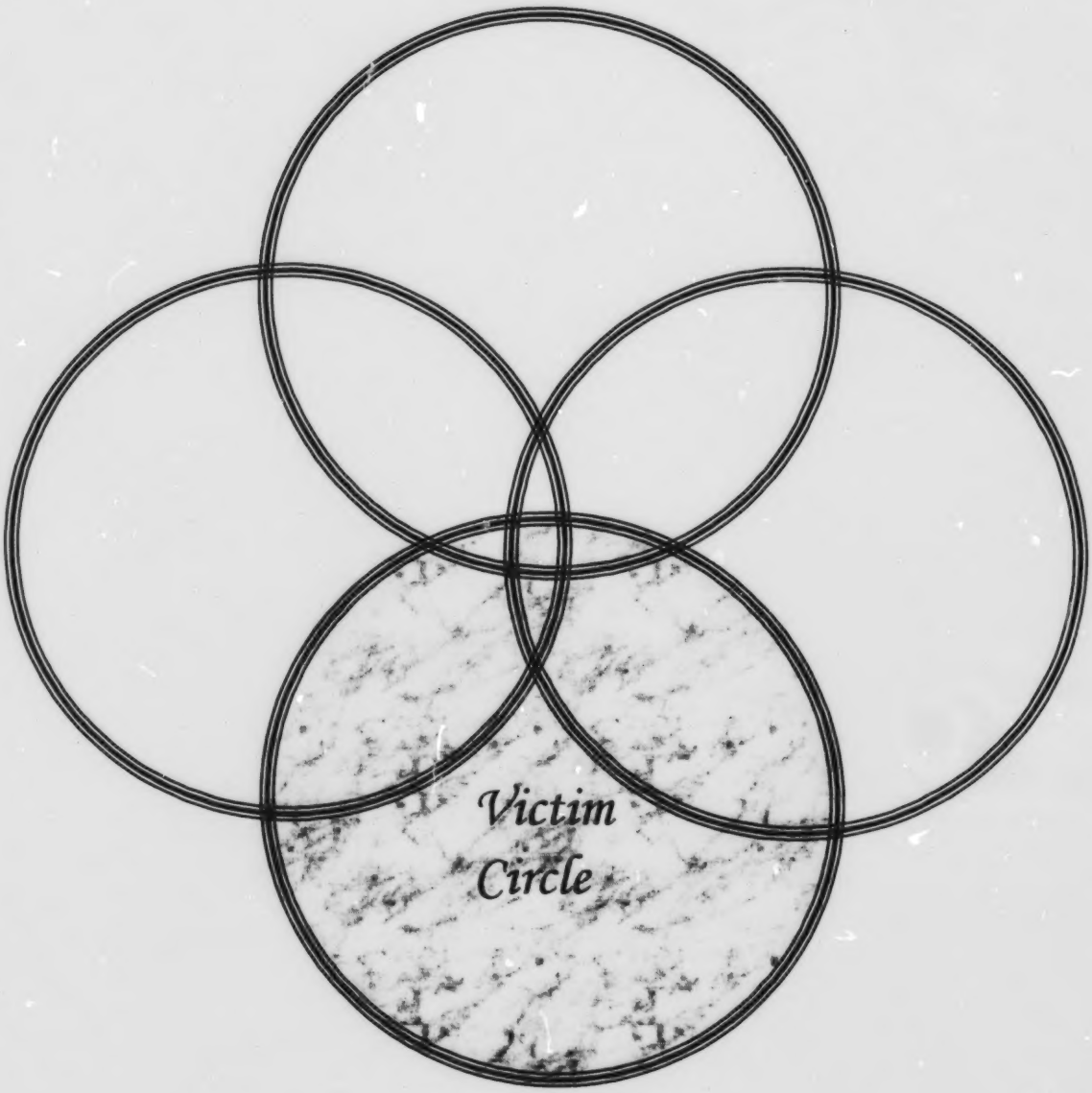
Laws, D. R. (1989). *Relapse Prevention With Sex Offenders*, New York: Guilford Press.

Maletzky, B. (1991). *Treating The Sexual Offender*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Marshall, W. L., Laws, D. R., & Barbaree, H. E. (1990). *Handbook Of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theories, And Treatment Of The Offender,* New York: Plenum Press.

Mathews, R., Mathews, J., & Speltz, K. (1989). *Female Sexual Offenders,* Brandon, VT: Safer Society Press.

Salter, A. C. (1988). *Treating Child Sex Offenders And Victims: A Practical Guide,* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.


Victim
Circle

The Victims' Circle: Sexual Assault and Traumatization in an Ojibwa Community

by Christine Sivell-Ferri

INTRODUCTION

Victims are not uncommon in Canadian society. The sexual abuse of children in the Hollow Water community is not an isolated circumstance. It can be generally suggested that sexual abuse occurs at a rate of approximately one out of five for girls and perhaps one out of ten for boys. It is generally recognized, however, that boys disclose less frequently than girls and so the statistical picture for boys may actually be much worse.[88] In 1994, Hollow Water's Community Holistic Circle Healing team (CHCH) estimated three out of four members of the Hollow Water community are victims of sexual abuse and that one in three people has been an abuser.[89]

In both Canada as a whole, and Hollow Water in particular, people have been living in a culture that has little insight into the trauma of sexual abuse victimization. Denial of the existence and extent of abuse in all communities has been a fact of life. It has also been a fact of life throughout Canada, as well as in Hollow Water, that the damage of sexual abuse can be exacerbated by systems supposedly designed to assist the victim. Hollow Water has come further in the past decade than other communities in Canada in preventing re-offending, and in developing approaches to support and heal victims rather than compound the problems of sexual abuse.

This paper will take the reader through the stages victims follow to address their victimization in western systems of therapy and, in Hollow Water, through Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH). The paper consists of three sections:

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88 Jan Hindman. Just Before Dawn. AlexAndria Associates, Ontario, Oregon, USA, 1989, p. 2

89 CHCH; "Position on Incarceration", CHCH files, Hollow Water, Manitoba, 93.04.20, p. 2

1. Victimization

• Explains victimization and how the initial victimization can be compounded.

2. The Effects of Sexual Abuse on Individuals and Communities

- The effects of sexual abuse victimization on individuals are discussed including the nature of psychological trauma, its broad characteristics and symptoms, and how symptoms of trauma manifest as a defence against the pain of sexual abuse;
- The community impact of victimization is discussed;
- The impact of victimization in Hollow Water as an Aboriginal community is explored.

3. Healing

- How western psychiatric systems conceptualize healing and victim treatment is covered. It is followed by the CHCH view. Some critical differences and similarities between the approaches are noted.

Part One: Victimization

NAMING

> When I was a child, how could I have told? Even without being paralyzed by terror I had no words. I had never heard of *sexual abuse* and the things my uncle was doing were to parts of my body that I'd learned never even to mention in 'polite' company.
>
> *Survivor - female* [90]

To be perpetuated, sexual abuse needs silence, secrecy and fear. Lack of knowledge contributes to those necessary conditions. Naming, developing

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90 Only two survivors voices are heard here in direct quotes, one male and one female. It is not intended that they be heard as a representative sample but rather, it is hoped, their words will help convey insights and emotions text may not.

vocabulary, and articulating concepts help those who are victimized to find their voice. Language empowers.

Terms referring to the roles of people involved in sexual abuse and sexual assault need clarification: *victim, survivor, client, victimizer, offender, perpetrator. Survivor* carries hope but should not create distance from the sadness of knowing that there are many, many *victims* — all those who have been killed by crime, by abuse and neglect, by violence and suicide. Their absence is in itself their plea for change.

As well, victims exist who, though surviving, continue to feel shamed. In effect, they carry the shame and blame that rightly belong to the offender. Lacking perspective, they don't yet recognize the characteristics of victimization and have not yet found their voice.

Offender, victimizer and *perpetrator* are used interchangeably. It is recognized that offenders too, may have been victimized. This confused melding of victim-within-victimizer does not excuse or exonerate offenses. Dual citizenship, so to speak, does not rationalize the hurt inflicted. It is only a starting point from which to move toward understanding. Accountability belongs to the offender. Healing is the task of all.

Process

Sgroi identifies five phases of child sexual assault: (1) Engagement; (2) Sexual Interaction; (3) Maintaining Secrecy; (4) Disclosure; (5) Suppression.
In the first phase of victimization specific acts by an offender, directly and immediately, affect some individual or cluster of individuals; victims are created. To offend, two conditions must be met — access and opportunity. The child is known to the offender in the vast majority of cases, though stranger assault is far more publicized. The offender creates the opportunity or takes advantage of the trust that provides him with one. This creation of *victim* is only the initial victimization, and may be only the beginning of a process.

In phases two and three offenders use pressure, coercion, threats, bribes, or force to maintain the sexual availability of the child and ensure secrecy.[91] It is

[91] see also The Offender Circle in this book by Marshall and Fernandez.

still true that far from all instances of child sexual assault reach the fourth phase, Disclosure. When disclosure, either accidental or intentional, does occur there may be pressures placed on the victim to retract the accusation. The fifth phase, Suppression, begins. Attempts may be made to blame the victim or excuse the offender.

Thus, victimization can continue and be compounded beyond the assaults. There may be overt attempts at suppression, but in even more covert ways, the damage of the initial victimization can be compounded through the responses of family, the attitudes and approaches of medical and judicial personnel, media protrayals of sexuality and society's attitudes. Family, community, and society make a difference in whether an individual experiences further victimization or moves toward relief and healing.

COMPOUNDED VICTIMIZATION

FAMILIES

Empathy, understanding and support for the trauma of sexual abuse do not necessarily come from even those closest to the victims. The family may support the disclosure and the victim, or it may work to suppress disclosure and, hence, further victimize the child.

There are many reasons for families being unwilling or unable to support victims of sexual abuse and assault. Society's confused attitudes about sexuality are a partial explanation. Archaic thoughts regarding the roles of men and women may result in the victim receiving messages that the sexual abuse was of no consequence if virginity remains, or that the whole incident must be kept quiet to preserve the family's respectable name.

Lack of knowledge about child development also accounts for some aspects of the family's complicating victimization. The belief prevails that the child will simply not remember, or through the passage of time, no longer be affected by the trauma. Because, as a whole, society has denied the existence of prevalent sexual abuse, a greater degree of ignorance and unhelpful attitudes persists than in response to other less hidden human problems. Many families are unaware of how to help or in what ways their responses increase the abuse victim's difficulties. For other families, a child's disclosure brings them face to face with their own issues around victimization. If they are unable to confront

their own histories and vulnerabilities they may work to suppress or deny the child's victimization.

In Hollow Water, enforced residential school attendance and abuse within that system over four generations have left many families without knowledge of genuine family life or what constitutes healthy sexuality. This means that there has not been a healthy base from which a family could react. If the cycle of abuse and abusability began with the residential schools, there was no recourse for the children. Nor was there any family to whom they could appeal.

LEGAL SYSTEM

> An adversarial legal system is of necessity a hostile environment; it is organized as a battlefield in which strategies of aggressive arguement and psychological attack replace those of physical force.[92] *Judith Herman*

> Our children and the community can no longer afford the price the legal system is extracting in its attempts to provide justice in our community.[93] *CHCH*

The mainstream criminal justice and legal systems developed from premises designed to protect men from the superior power of the state. Justice systems derived from European roots were not designed to protect women and children from the superior power of men. The criminal justice system ensures there are strong guarantees for the rights of the accused while the state acts on behalf of the victim to secure the victim's rights.

In practice this situation can be very detrimental. The court is designed to be adversarial. It is a place of aggressive argument. It was not designed as a safe place for victims, especially children, to confront their victimizers and address their victimization.

These building blocks of law result in particular inconsistencies with regard to children. All provinces and territories have *age of consent* laws. No child below

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92 Judith Herman. Trauma & Recovery. Basic Books, Harper & Collins, (NYC), 1992, p. 72

93 CHCH; "CHCH Position on Incarceration", CHCH files, Hollow Water, Manitoba, 93.04.20, p. 5

the *age of consent* is deemed able to knowledgeably consent to sex. It's against the law to have sex with children because they are unequal, and less powerful and the full implications are beyond their cognitive abilities. Yet in a court of law, the same system can demand complete equality from children. They are often expected to think, reason and recall like adults if they are to be considered credible witnesses. Even putting children on the stand forces them to participate in a process that in many ways further victimizes them.

CHCH has identified additional ways in which the legal system may compound victimization:

> The legal system's use of incarceration under the guise of specific and general deterrence seems, to us, to be ineffective in breaking the cycle of violence [within our community]. Victimization has become so much a part of who we are, as a people and a community, that the threat of jail simply does not deter offending behaviour. What the threat of incarceration does do is keep people from coming forward and taking responsibility for the hurt they are causing. It reinforces the silence and therefore promotes, rather than breaks, the cycle of violence that exists. In reality, rather than making the community a safer place, the threat of jail places the community more at risk.
>
> To make matters worse, community members who are charged with violent acts have, historically, remained in the community, often for months, awaiting a court hearing. They are presumed innocent until proven guilty. In this period of time there is often no accountability to the community and, unknown to the outside, reoffending often occurs.[94]

STIGMA

For soldiers, re-entry to civilian life after the trauma of war is somewhat eased through what have been termed 'cleansing experiences'. Cleansing is accomplished through the stature of heroism conferred upon them, through society's acceptance of their acts as moral within the context of war, and through the ceremonies associated with medal presentations and Remembrance Day.

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[94] Ibid. p. 2-3

It has been generally accepted that the Vietnam veterans were more traumatized than veterans of other wars. They have had higher rates of suicide, substance abuse, marital breakdown and other signs of dysfunction. Stigma was crucial to their trauma. They were associated with an unpopular war about which public opinion, as to its morality, was divided. These young soldiers were shipped home individually, without the sanctioning of public welcome and home-coming celebrations, and often to a hostile, blaming public. It is this latter treatment of soldiers emerging from the horror of war that shares more in common with the treatment of women and children emerging from the horror of sexual abuse and rape.

"The most common trauma of women remains confined to the sphere of private life, without formal recognition or restitution from the community. There is no public monument for rape victims." [95] There is no ritual or custom for grieving the loss of innocence through sexual abuse. There is no ceremony of cleansing for those who have been sexually violated.

Similarly, no stature of heroism is associated with survival of childhood sexual abuse or rape. No Survivor Recognition Day is set aside. A child lost in the wilderness who survives the cold black nights, and days without food or solace, is welcomed home in triumph. People are proud of the child's courage and will. No one dismisses that child's fears and anguish as excessive. Reporters are there and the bulbs flash. Even a whole nation may be caught up in the emotion and outpouring of support for the child and family, as the United States did when little two-year old Jessica McClure was trapped in an old well shaft in the late 1980s.

But a family's reaction to the disclosure that their young child has endured sexual abuse may be unsupportive. Society tends to be suspicious of the survivors of a pornography ring. Perhaps because sexual experiences are normally pleasurable, there is suspicion that any real harm could have been engendered by the abuse. Or perhaps the stigmatizing comes, as shock quickly turns to disbelief, if the child discloses details not congruent with normal adults perceptions of sexual encounters.

Not only is there no acknowledgement of the heroism involved in surviving sexual abuse, not only is there a lack of empathy for the pain endured, but society also attaches stigma — a young woman's choice of clothing invited the

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[95] Herman, p. 73

rape, a little girl was behaving seductively, the child participated willingly, or most commonly, the child's perception is simply invalidated through lack of acknowledgement and support. Sexual abuse has a stigma attached to it that other forms of disaster do not.

CYCLES

There is debate about the connection between experiencing sexual abuse and growing up to deliver abuse.[96] According to some statistics, 30 percent to 80 percent of offenders were sexually abused. Recent research suggests that perhaps the cycle of abused to abuser is not as prevalent as once believed.[97] What we do know, however, is that some sexually abused children grow into adults who abuse.

The cyclical nature of sexual abuse can manifest in another way. Victimization may set into motion lifelong patterns of abusability. It is not uncommon for sexual victims to develop and continue self-abusive cycles.[98] Substance abuse, self-mutilation, criminal behaviour, learned self-helplessness, domestic violence, depression, and psychiatric problems are all examples of victimization evolving into a cycle of abuse/abusability.

CULTURAL DISCORD

Victimization for Hollow Water people can be compounded in the ways already discussed. Obviously, victimization would be intensified if blatant prejudices and disparaging attitudes were held by those in the medical, legal, or other systems assisting Ojibwa people. The feelings of isolation and disconnection resulting from sexual abuse may be intensified even when 'helping people' within western systems are competent and caring. For healing and recovery to be effective, there must be therapy. The Elders build support around the individual. Through healing circles they draw the victim into a supportive network. If an Aboriginal individual, already experiencing disempowerment within the dominant society, enters conventional western therapy there is a risk of increasing feelings of aloneness. The individual works alone with the therapist and at the end of a session may well walk out alone.

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96 see also The Offender Circle in this book by Marshall and Fernandez.

97 Hindman, p.5. Also see Barbaree, H.E., Laws, D.R., Marshall, W.L. Handbook of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theories and Treatment of the Offender. Plenum Press, N.Y.,1990

98 Hindman, p. 3

> I went to a few sessions and I probably could've gotten help, but what scared me was, I got in touch with my rage and for the first time, I became aware of how terrifying it was. I couldn't make myself go back to a therapist, because I'm going to be there alone, and I am going to be touching this terrible thing inside me, and I'm going to be walking away alone.[99]

If the therapeutic process doesn't have a cultural fit, at best it may 'go in one ear and out the other'. At worst, the victim may be left feeling 'at fault' for his or her inability to benefit from the therapeutic process and thus further discouraged, further victimizerd.

Victimization doesn't end with disclosure of the abuse.

Part Two: Effects of Victimization: Psychological Trauma

Effects of Victimization On Individuals

> The periods of greatest psychological vulnerability are also the periods of greatest traumatic exposure.[100]

Sexual assault traumatizes children. Whether or not the child suffers physical injuries, a degree of psychological harm always ensues.[101] For a child, the impact of even one traumatic event may be profound and lasting. More commonly, the sexual abuse of a child continues for months or years. Recovery from prolonged sexual abuse in childhood is extraordinarily difficult.

This section focuses on psychological trauma, its definitions, and the broad characteristics and symptoms of its persistent and pervasive aftereffects.

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99 Berma Bushie, Joyce Bushie. "Reflections on Hollow Water", CHCH files, Hollow Water, Manitoba, September, 1996, p. 6
Berma Bushie, a member of the Hollow Water community and the CHCH team, has been integrally involved, since the inception, with the development of Community Holistic Circle Healing. Her words may be found in the fourth circle in this book.

100 Herman, p. 61

101 Hindman.

DEFINITIONS

TRAUMA

The literature uses and defines trauma in two primary ways:

- Trauma describes an overwhelming event or stressor. The importance of this first definition is that it excludes life's accepted and normal[102] difficulties and challenges.

- The concept of trauma is used to represent the survivor's psychological distress during and soon after the traumamatic event. This second aspect of trauma — its psychological nature — holds the greater importance in this paper.

McCann and Pearlman (1990) emphasise the individual nature of the experience of psychological trauma. They say an essential part of what determines whether an experience is traumatic is the individual's sense that it is so. Discrepency between the force of the event and what the child can emotionally and psychologically bear results in trauma. Unexpected, non-normative, and overwhelming, traumatic events threaten the psychological core. They result in the shattering we call psychological trauma.

"Trauma is an individual's response to intensity," states Leonard Shengold in Soul Murder. He puts it simply, " When a child experiences too much too-muchness, we speak of trauma."[103] Herman speaks of psychological trauma as an "affliction of the powerless"[104] whereby the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. Traumatic events, she continues, "confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror."[105] In trauma the individual confronts the threat of annihilation.

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[102] Even though sexual abuse may be a constant in a community or population, because it is not sanctioned by law or societal attitudes it is not a *normal* life difficulty. *Age of consent* is established in law. Sex without consent is thus a crime and by virtue of the fact a child is a child consent is never given in legal terms. (Hindman 1989)

[103] Leonard Shengold; Soul Murder: The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1989, p. 1 of the intro.

[104] Herman, p. 33

[105] Loc. cit.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

> We can't forget either that any abuse that a child or a youth has suffered is an interruption, a break in his or her evolution. The body is often abused but it's the heart that bleeds and the soul which is wounded. [106] *Dr. Jean Marc Perron*

Trauma reverberates through people and their relationships to other people. As a stone cast into a pond (Figley), as a wrench tossed in among meshing gears, the traumatic event is the moment of impact. Responses and adaptations can be likened to ripples across the water or the screeching, grinding, and jamming of the assailed gears.

Other writers have likened traumatic events to a footprint in the psyche and trauma's aftermath to the trail of footsteps moving out from the initial imprint. The work of the healer is to help the survivors follow this trail through them selves and their relaticnships. The shape of each footprint and the lay of the trail varies from person to person. It may be impressed more deeply in some, while the same traumatic event may leave a lighter treadmark in others.

In terms of the analogy of the wrench tossed among the works, the initial moment of trauma is the wrench striking the gears. The sounds of assailed metal can be likened to the traumatic reactions, but it is the damage to the machinery itself that is analogous to PTSD. Herman tells more specifically how trauma results in a lasting, pervasive disorder:

> The ordinary human response to danger is a complex, integrated system of reactions encompassing both body and mind. ... Changes in arousal, attention, perception and emotion are normal adaptive reactions. ... Traumatic reactions occur when action is of no avail. When neither resistance nor escape is possible, the human system of self-defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganised. Each component of the ordinary response to danger, having lost its utility, tends to persist in an altered and exaggerated state long after the actual danger is over.

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[106] Dr. Jean Marc Perron. This is Dawn; Highlights of the Conference. Quebec Native Women, Health Canada, p. 43

> Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition and memory.[107]
>
> Moreover, traumatic events may sever these normally integrated functions from one another. The traumatized person may experience intense emotion but without clear memory of the event, or remember everything in detail but without emotion. [Survivors] may find [themselves] in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why. Traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become disconnected from their source and to take on a life of their own.[108]

The fragmentation that results from trauma tearing apart the complex human system of self-protection that normally works together is central in what is currently called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Its symptoms may be grouped into classifications. Classification is an endeavour to find ways into the reality of sexual abuse victims. It is simply one way of knowing and does not imply that there are no others nor that *real* people come in such tidy arrangements. Writers[109] have also worked to determine *why* some children show deep and lasting imprints, chronically reverberating shock waves, while others show only faint marks on their souls. All the authors reviewed are concerned with the 'shape of the marks', with naming them in order to better explain their characteristics to others, and with how they manifest as actions and ways of being.

SYMPTOMS

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[107] Bessel Van der Kolk. "The Trauma Spectrum: The Interaction of Biological and Social Events in the Genesis of the Trauma Response" in **Journal of Traumatic Stress** (1988), pp. 273-290. Van der Kolk, as quoted in Herman, postulates that traumatic memories are aberrantly encoded and can result in a general memory impairment. He speculates that the linguistic encoding of memory is inactivated and the CNS reverts to the sensory and iconic forms of memory that predominate in early life. This aberrant encoding can result in a general cognitive and memory impairment. This is one physiological manifestation of psychological damage to the basic structures of the self.

[108] Herman, p. 34

[109] Particularly Jan Hindman, a practicing psychologist in Ontario, Oregon and author of Just Before Dawn.

Three broad classifications of symptoms: *hyperarousal, intrusion,* and *constriction* (also called *numbing*) are briefly outlined.

HYPERAROUSAL

The American psychiatric society's manual (DSM-4 1985) lists hyperarousal symptoms as the first cardinal indicators of a diagnosis of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A traumatized individual reflects a persistent expectation of danger, sleeps poorly, startles easily and reacts irritably to small provocations.

Generalized anxiety symptoms and specific fears pervade. This increase in arousal exists even in sleep states. Survivors take longer to fall asleep, awaken more frequently, and suffer from numerous types of sleep disorders. Trauma, it would seem, reconditions the human nervous system.[110]

> A feeling of fear was always with me. ... I would lie on my bed ... listening and waiting. The sound of my anxious heart beat so loudly I'd think it was footsteps coming up the stairs. I made up elaborate scenarios of why I was afraid to distract me from what I knew. *survivor — male*

> I went to university and learned that other young women went to sleep at night and woke up in the morning — that frightened me and intensified my feeling that I was weird and terribly alone. *survivor — female*

Understanding the symptoms of trauma in general, and the affects of hyperarousal on emotion, memory, and cognition in particular make clear why abused children may show poor concentration at many school-related tasks and a lack of school success.

> School was a nightmare. ... Concentration eluded me. Often I would drift in my thoughts when being spoken to. People assumed I didn't understand and soon expected less and less. "Why are you so stupid? ... so stupid? ...so stupid?" ... If I had allowed my mind — or perhaps it's more accurate to say — if my mind had allowed me, to focus and concentrate I would not have been able to keep my dreadful secrets from myself. He made me watch my sister being spanked. I became aroused as he wanted me to, then I felt

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[110] Ibid. p. 36

> so ashamed and conflicted. I realised he was making me in his own image. How could I live?
>
> *survivor — male*

Many studies show us that the psychological and physiological changes of the post-traumatic state are extensive and enduring. This persistence of symptoms cues us to recognize what the literature refers to again and again — survivors must feel safe to begin to recover.

INTRUSION

The traumatic event, though long past, may intrude upon the survivor anytime, anywhere, and in any one of a number of ways. It's as if traumatic memory is abnormally encoded and this abnormal encoding allows it to break through into consciousness — spontaneously during waking states as *flashbacks* and unbidden into sleeping states as *nightmares.* Unpredictable and unbidden, trauma re-visited through memory provokes intense emotions, which often seem beyond what the survivor can bear. Survivors, understandably, go to great lengths to avoid it. But this self-protective attempt to hold traumatic memory at bay actually aggravates the symptoms of post-traumatic distress; memory avoidance carries a high cost. Narrowing of consciousness, isolation, inability to engage with others and diminishing of life in all its aspects compose part of the price.[111]

> All emotion and, perversely, most especially joy and delight, has to be suppressed. If I allow myself to really experience the simple pleasure of cradling my baby it's as if some crucial defense slips and all the old horrible images sneak up through the cracks and infiltrate everywhere. Distance and reserve lessen life's pleasures but at least the horror is kept in check.
>
> *survivor — female*

Characteristically, in trauma, symptoms persist. It is as if the ordinary response to danger, though lessened in usefulness, stays on — exaggerated and disguised. Intrusive symptoms are disturbing. Understanding the terror repetitive nightmares bring is easy. It should be noted, however, that most theorists believe the repetitive, re-living/dreaming represents a spontaneous,

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[111] refer to Herman, p. 37

though not successful, attempt at healing.[112] Considering these frightening experiences in this way helps us understand them as evidence of survivorship — not 'craziness'. Intrusive thoughts and actions attest to the on-going struggle to find meaning and integrate that which has been overwhelming.

In a sense, these intense, disturbing symptoms take on a life of their own. The individual, not necessarily aware of the source of these feelings, believes them to be intrinsic. For example, intrusive symptoms such as panic, a sensation of breathlessness, and extreme anxiety may come upon the survivor for no apparent reason. *Body memory*, also sometimes termed *skin memory*,[113] is triggered by a sight, a sound, a smell that provokes these powerful physiological and psychological reactions yet their origin remains outside conscious awareness. Thus, intrusive symptoms fulfill what Herman calls the dialectic of trauma — simultaneous concealment and revelation of the terrible, unspeakable secrets of the survivor.

Flashbacks, flooding, and *loss of recall* are prevalent intrusive symptoms. In *flashbacks* the individual is immersed in the traumatic memory, losing awareness of the present. Needless to say this overwhelming memory can terrify. In *flooding* the victim experiences a disruption of the present through intense emotion seemingly from nowhere, or days made chaotic by the invasion of memories.

CONSTRICTION

A person rendered completely powerless may escape from the situation through altering consciousness. Events may continue to register but the victim becomes curiously detached. Ordinary meaning and emotional response are lost. Some survivors even describe leaving their bodies and watching from a diffferent

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[112] Herman, Janet Freud, et al in Herman, p. 41

[113] Most of the psychology-based trauma literature reviewed by this author used the term *body memory* to describe this phenomenon. Jan Hindman, psychologist and author, uses *skin memory*. Clarification may be gained through the following example: A young girl was *traumatically asymptotic* until in early adolescence the smell of the sweaty bodies of the young males in her gym class provoked torrents of anxiety, distressing her greatly as she perceived herself as 'weird'. A few weeks after the triggering of the *body memory* floods of imagery and more full memory came into her consciousness and therapy began. For many survivors, however, the connections do not emerge as clearly or quickly and there may be years or even decades of psychological distress with no clear understanding of its source.

vantage point. Certain sensations, for example pain perception, may be lost and other perceptions may be numbed or distorted.

These changes from ordinary consciousness are at the heart of constriction, called *numbing or splitting*, and comprise the third major hallmark of post-traumatic stress disorder. Hypnotic trance states are very similar. It is well accepted that both are *dissociative* states though their biology remains a puzzle. For abuse victims these states are often regarded as one of nature's small mercies. Long after the traumatic event, survivors may tend to react to stress with some degree of *dissociation*. Some survivors recall eating and eating with no registration of a sensation of fullness happening. Others talk of going for days without eating and not registering hunger. Lots of survivors talk of walking around bumping into furniture and walls and a sensation of not being completely within the body.

Some trauma victims, for whom *dissociation* is not spontaneous, numb themselves psychically using alcohol or other drugs. Some use both defenses. Both *dissociation* and drugs may assist in short term survival but are maladaptive. In the long run, they serve only to compound life's difficulties. Some dissociative states possess uncanny attributes which, at times, prove useful but for most survivors remain unpredictable in occurrence and result.

THE DIALECTIC OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

> The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma.[114]
>
> Denial of reality makes them feel crazy but acceptance of the full reality seems beyond what any human being can bear.[115]

Experienced by children differently than adults, and by each child in his or her own way, trauma, nonetheless, always acts as a wrench thrown in the works. With trauma, the banishing of it from consciousness or the rationalization, minimization and denial of it is the norm. (Herman 1992; Hindman 1989) The victim's emotional state oscillates. At times emotion, which seems to go beyond the human capacity for being borne, overwhelms the person. At times

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[114] Herman, introduction, p. i

[115] Herman, p. 181

emotionless arid stretches, when the victim is unable to connect with any feelings, are equally incapacitating. The instability produced by these oscillating emotional states intensifies the traumatized person's sense of unpredictability and helplessness. Not only is havoc wreaked in relationships, these individuals frighten and alienate themselves. Such patterns have the potential to continue indefinitely.

SYMPTOMS AS DEFENSE

Defenses protect the self. The defenses required to survive the humiliating pain of sexual abuse manifest in many ways. All the signs, all the behaviours that we have come to recognize as symptoms of sexual abuse within children and their adult counterparts help shield the victim from the truth of their reality. Whether a child withdraws or 'acts out', becomes suicidal, or a super-achiever, the behaviour stems from the underlying emotional pain — a chaotic mix of shame, guilt, powerlessness, and rage. This chaotic mix may be the result of a single overwhelming event or it may be further complicated by the fact the abuse has taken place over a prolonged period. As well, in many cases, the child receives the abuse from the very people from whom he or she should be receiving nurturing and care.

One way of attempting to give insight into these defenses is shown in the following chart. It combines the structure of the American Psychiatric Society's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder chart with the more understandable language of The Spirit Weeps and other sources.[116]

Characteristics of Post-Traumatic Stress in Child Sexual Assualt Victims:

- Alterations of normal mood including:
  - persistent feelings of sadness and/or loneliness
  - depression
  - chronic suicidal preoccupation

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[116] For more information see "Characteristics of a Child Sexual Assault Victim" in The Spirit Weeps; "Honouring What You Did to Survive" in The Courage to Heal; and the video "Healing From Childhood Sexual Abuse" by Claudia Black, Ph.D. list, define and help explain the many characteristic ways a child or an adult survivor may indicate they are in emotional pain stemming from sexual abuse.

- explosive or extremely inhibited anger and aggression and especially alternations between the two withdrawal
- sexual promiscuity and confusion of sex with love and caring
- emotional entanglement with the offender and the offender's needs

- Alterations in consciousness, including:

  - amnesia or denial of the traumatic events
  - periods of *dissociation, numbing, splitting,* compartmentalizing reliving experiences in the form of *intrusive* PTSD symptoms or in the form of a continual preoccupation with thinking about the events
  - phobias

- Alterations in self-perception and behaviour, including:

  - inappropriate sexual knowledge and/or play
  - self-injury
  - sense of helplessness and loss of initiative
  - shame, guilt, blame
  - low self-esteem
  - regressive or infantile behaviour
  - pseudomaturity
  - alcohol and/or drug abuse
  - extreme behaviours relating to hygiene or nighttime security
  - sudden changes in behaviour
  - eating or sleeping problems
  - sense of defilement and stigma
  - sense of complete difference from others (may include sense of specialness, utter aloneness, belief no other person can understand, or non-human identity)

- Alterations in perception of offender, including:

  - preoccupation with relationship with offender
  - preoccupation with revenge
  - unrealistic attribution of total power to the offender

- Alterations in relations with others, including:

  - isolation and withdrawal from family and friendships

- repeated search for rescuer (may alternate with isolation and withdrawal)
- inability to trust
- inappropriate peer relationships
- lying
- running away
- school related problems

- Alterations in spirituality:

  - loss of sustaining faith
  - sense of hopelessness and despair
  - inability to visualise or conceptualise a personal future

Sexually Abused Boys

> The preponderance of abuse boys suffer is at the hands of males raising questions about their masculinity... [and] stigmatizing them. Large numbers never get any reassurance that might save them from years of silent suffering.
>
> David Finklehor, *The Sexual Abuse of Boys*

The Kinsey study of 1948 did not gather systematic data on sexual contact between boys and adults, believing such contacts occurred infrequently, but they did indicate that most contacts were homosexual. A 1956 study said three in ten boys had a childhood sexual encounter with an adult. Current estimates approximate one in eight (Marshall, 1996). In Hollow Water only one victim of fifty identified was male. The statistics vary but all these studies report that the vast majority of abuse was by male offenders. It is the predominantly homosexual nature of the abuse that differentiates the sexual abuse of boys from that of girls.

Boys and Disclosure

> I tend to see most bars that are packed with chronic drinkers as Boy's Clubs populated with men too ashamed to tell their story, staying out to the last possible moment before they have to go

> home with their fears, or to a relationship made complicated by the legacy of the abuse they've kept secret all these years.
>
> *a survivor* — male

Finklehor, Hindman[117] and others state that boys disclose the abuse even less frequently than girls. Finklehor stresses that the idea inherent in society that boys initiate the contact and are not negatively affected is an assumption and not borne out by the research. He states, "the impact on long term sexual self-esteem is just as negative for boys, if not more so, as the impact upon girls."[118]

Lack of Clarity about Self as Victim

Hindman too, emphasises how severely the trauma of abuse affects boys. One of her key points is that for healing to begin, the victim must perceive that he or she was victimized. Until the victims realize clearly that they were not responsible for the abuse, they tend to carry the shame and blame that rightly belongs to the abuser. It is in the abuser's interest to keep this clarity from the child and abusers may be very skillful at blurring the distinction.

Homosexuality

For boys, this clarity of their status as victim becomes confused in several ways. First, because the abuse is homosexual in nature, and Canadian society as a whole tends to be homophobic, boys have even more reason than girls to fear being stigmatized and rejected. This fear of rejection can be one reason boys disclose less frequently. Secondly, because the abuse is homosexual in nature, the boy, living in a society lacking knowledge about homosexuality, is more likely to feel there is some flaw within himself that the abuser recognized. Confusion about his victim status is maintained, as is his reluctance to disclose.

Physiology of Boys

The lack of information and education in society about the physiological differences between males and females also has particular direct effects for abused young males. Boys not taught about the sexual responsiveness of their genitalia and their inability to control that physiological responsiveness are left

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117 Hindman discusses issues relevant to boys and sexual abuse, pp. 155-160

118 David Finklehor, Ph.D. "The Sexual Abuse of Boys" in Burgess, A. (ed). Rape and Sexual Assault: A Research Handbook. Garland Books, N.Y., 1985, p. 150

more confused about their victimization if an unwanted sexual attack results in an erection. Boys are also left confused if they are not taught the difference between physiological symptoms of arousal and their willing partnership.

Boys and Female Sexuality Myths

Boys inculcated with the male myth that real men are sexually aggressive and seek sexual accessability are particularly at risk in the cases where a female is the offender. Compounding the male myth is the female myth that woman are sexy but not sexual. M*others, grandmothers* and *aunts*, say the myth, cannot be offenders. Together, these myths influence a boy's reluctance to disclose, and invalidate his perception that he has been victimized.

Boys, in different ways, and yet just as definitely as girls, need clarification about their sexual self-determination. Vulnerable to abuse, and at least as negatively affected as girls, boys all too often remain silent victims.

Effects of Psychological Trauma on Victims in Hollow Water

Bear in mind that the footprints, the shockwaves, the jammings, of psychological trauma as descibed here, are derived from the work of writers who are non-Aboriginal and predominantly American. This body of literature was not written for a cross-cultural audience. Many questions are raised, and yet Hollow Water 's work shows the universality of symptoms. Response, adaptation, and defense against the pain of sexual abuse, cut across cultural lines. All children need the security of nurturing caregivers and a safe community. All are traumatized by abuse.

Summary

- Sexual assault always carries a degree of psychological harm for children. Often it traumatizes. The three broad adaptations to trauma: *hyperarousal, intrusion,* and *constriction,* discussed in this paper, separate it from ordinary awareness. Unfortunately, integration of that which was beyond bearing during the traumatic event must be accomplished or these tenacious and disturbing symptoms persist and distort until distinguishing them from the personality of the victim becomes profoundly difficult.

- Misdiagnosis of sexually traumatized children and their adult counterparts is common. The number and complexity of their symptoms, the walling-off of truth, and the victim's extremely damaged capacity for trust results in a complex and confusing picture, often resulting in a fragmented, incomplete therapy. The shattering of trust means that a close therapeutic relationship is difficult and leaves these children and adults especially vulnerable to revictimization by anyone giving them care. Destructive interactions are as familiar as breathing. Abuse has become normalized and the patterns are hard to break.

- A diminished life for traumatized individuals is equally common. Hyperarousal (the state of permanent alertness); intrusion (unbidden and unpredictable symptoms including body memory, flashbacks, and nightmares); and constriction (*numbing, splitting, dissociation* and substance abuse) are attempts to defend survivors from their own memories; however, in so doing, they prevent the survivors from living their own lives. Psychological trauma has great power to ensure that the events from the past forever shape the events of the future.

Effects of Victimization On Community

General

> The work of sexual offenders envelopes all of us in trauma.[119]
> *Jan Hindman*

The effects of victimization through sexual abuse extend far past the individuals the offender actually assaults. Of course, the individual takes the primary impact. Consider first, the child who has been victimized. Sexual development receives the impact. Vital connections among the psyche and the self as a physical, and thus sexual, being become confused or even severed. Effects may last a lifetime. Victimization at this level robs an innocent child of something precious. For the adult victim, more fully developed before the victimization, the world as previously defined shatters to some degree. That previously deemed safe is rendered unsafe. Involvement in all aspects of life changes. The adult, too, needs help and healing or effects may persist for a lifetime.

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[119] Ibid. p. 4

Family

Like ripples on a pond the effects of victimization radiate outward. The second degree of effect concerns the entire family of the primary victim(s). Western society has odd sexual attitudes. Media, through advertisements and entertainment content, promote a sexually promiscuous lifestyle.[120] On the one hand, this highly sexualized atmosphere predominates, and yet on the other hand, very traditional views about virginity and sex outside marriage may be a family's underlying beliefs. The family, especially that of a deeply cared for child, feels tainted by the ugliness of this robbery of innocence. The family can experience profound shame and degradation when abuse is disclosed. "It is rare that a child is sexually abused without trauma affecting the entire family."[121]

Community

The ripple-effect continues into community. Sexual abuse and family turmoil spread out involving whatever agencies of support the community offers. The more endemic the abuse, the more overloaded the agencies. Tough economic times not only stress families but also require agencies to do more with less. It's hard to break the cycle of abuse when resouces are slim. Educational resources are stretched even further when money is needed to deal with the brush fires offenders are starting in children's lives.

Society

Finally, the ripples permeate society in general. Even with our shift from complete denial of sexual abuse, victims still commonly keep the secrets and remain caught in the conspiracy of silence. Throughout childhood they quietly suffer various forms of trauma. Eventually, rage, depression and all manner of dysfunction surface and as adults these childhood victims require services and resources. Individuals victimized as adults also have an impact upon society, financially as the necessary agencies and services are used, and in other less concrete ways as they try to recover.

> It was me he hurt but everybody gets to pay the bill. At the age of 19 I was committed for nine months to a psychiatric ward. In all

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[120] for further discussion see Just Before Dawn, pp. 153-156

[121] Hindman, p. 4

that time, all that expense, I never disclosed. They did keep me alive and that was good, but in nine months no psychiatrist got near the source of my suicidal behaviours and my utter inability to get on with everyday life. Now, years later, I leave jobs, and relationships seem to implode. Mostly my parents support me financially. My offender left the restaurant years before without picking up the bill and everybody is still paying his tab.

Survivor — male

VICTIMIZATION AND ABORIGINAL REALITY

Understanding the psychology of trauma helps us lay out the parameters of its damage, but socio-political reality also plays a role in how an individual and a community are victimized. Traumatic events, like other misfortunes, Judith Herman contends, are especially merciless to those who are already troubled or relatively disempowered and marginalized.[122]

Aboriginal communities have long been disempowered by the social policies of federal and provincial government agencies and religious organizations. For Hollow Water, the individual's trauma of sexual abuse takes place within a community and a culture already suffering. The prevalent sexual traumatization of children in Hollow Water then, is not socially isolated. It is a manifestation of the dysfunction within Aboriginal communites across the continent. Dysfunction, including the sexual abuse of children, is a forseeable outcome that has resulted from the deliberate intent of the dominant society to sever a people from themselves.

Reconstructing identity after the trauma of victimization is an extraordinarily difficult process. The difficulty of this process is intensified for children because their sense of self is still developing. The difficulty of this process is also intensified when sense of self, and the cultural integrity of that self, have been systematically eroded and disparaged. Thus, for those victimized in Hollow Water, an already difficult and painful process is made even more so.

Understanding the historical/cultural context and the destruction of the Ojibwa concepts of the 'Good Life' and attainment of *p'madziwin* are vital to understanding the Hollow Water trauma survivor and how he or she experienced

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[122] Herman, p. 60

the trauma. Trauma disrupts and severs. Disempowement and disconnection result. The impact of the direct trauma of victimization and the long standing socio-political forces are felt in both individual and community.

Understanding social and political reality helps in understanding the conflicts around restoring cultural traditions of healing, such as the sweat lodge. Such traditions may be seen as important in undoing the longstanding policies of severing the people from their roots and traditions. Or, for some community members, they may be seen as practices inherently tainted because they are Aboriginal and are better left discredited or banned.

Before the disruption of colonization, the pipe and pipe carrier were honoured in many First Nations. They were symbolic of a way of being and the values inherent to that way. As ceremonies and traditions were banned through Indian Act legislation, knowledge, and integration of that way of life, were systematically broken down. Now many communities find themselves seeking knowledge of traditional ways of being and knowing through the ceremony of the pipe. Though the exact role of the pipe within the culture may have changed, its importance has not lessened. Traditional forms of spirituality help people reconnect. Trauma severs; healing happens as connections are restored.

Social and political reality interweaves with the trauma to individual psyches and is a big determinant of the extent and type of damage experienced in Hollow Water. This reality needs to be recognized when considering what will help or hinder the healing of the people — the restoration of *p'madziwin* for individuals -- and for individuals comprising the Hollow Water whole.

Part Three: Healing — Treatment of Victims

Western Therapies

Healing

Survivors want to heal, want an end to their terrifying symptoms, would like to regard their body as something more than a crime scene festooned with yellow

tape. To give the reader more context within which to consider CHCH necessitates a discussion of healing in a non-Hollow Water context.

Healing Requires Relationships

At the heart of sexual abuse lies disempowerment and the disconnection of the individual from others. At the moment of trauma the victim is completely helpless; connection to meaning and self are lost. Therefore, to heal, the survivor must find a voice — must become empowered. To heal, new connections must be created.

A first and profound relationship is the survivors with themselves. They must no longer be isolated from their own history and truth. The first glimpses of that true story are very painful, but somehow the survivors must not look down in shame and must connect. The truth is indispensable. At the same time the survivors begin discovery of their truth. They must also connect with other people and begin to forge the basic capacities for "trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy."[123]

Healing takes place in relationships. It cannot occur in isolation. In Hollow Water the reconnecting happens as the Sacred Circle includes the victim and s/he considers her/his story. In the western tradition the reconnection may begin in the therapist's office. It is generally recognized by the leading therapists that the therapeutic relationship should be only one among many and "it is by no means the only, or even the best relationship in which recovery is fostered."[124] Thus, one difficult part of the process — finding and fostering relationships — is integral. Simple services, like the lift to a support group can make all the difference for the survivor. Hollow Water has placed great importance on bringing Elders to the community, thus gently helping to establish reconnection.

Healing Through Specific Insights

Jan Hindman writes of the *trauma bond* developed between offender and victim. She writes of the very specific ways in which there is bonding. For instance, one large aspect of the *trauma bond* is the victim's carrying the shame and guilt that rightly belong to the offender. Breaking the *bond* helps the victim heal through insight into its nature and effects. The specifics of the *bond* are dissected, and

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123 E. Erickson. Childhood and Society. 2nd ed., Norton, NY, 1963

124 Herman, p. 134

examined. Insight comes. The offender, for example, did not have uncontrollable biological needs. "It is directing the mad, the sad, the hate, the pain: it is sorting, dissecting, resolving, returning, undoing, and freeing the child within".[125]

Jan Hindman's phrase 'freeing the child within' reflects an important aspect of the journey to integration. Parts of the self have been hidden and split off from conscious awareness. The child within has been carrying dreadful secrets and shame. When at last these inner beliefs are turned over, considered, and seen as erroneous, there is much freeing. A more complete self exists to bring to bear upon any project, task, or problem. The victim is no longer as *compartmentalized.*

It takes a certain focus to carry out the tasks of everyday life. Unresolved victimization taps an individual's energy the way diversion projects siphon off water and leave less in the river's natural course to give life downstream. As insights and understandings develop the person becomes more whole, has more natural energy to focus on whatever is at hand. Victims attempting to accomplish any task while symptoms intrude and disrupt never have all of themselves to put into anything. Insights are freeing; there is healing.

Stages of Recovery

Judith Herman's Model

Herman also identifies other models which show essentially the same condition — the unspeakable — and how other psychologists have conceptualized healing. They are included here as they may prove useful in the reader's developing understanding of the process of healing and recovery. Again, it's wise to remember people don't really heal in simple linear progression. But within the complexities of the person there is some spiraling toward wholeness and a model is one way of looking into those complexities.

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[125] Hindman, p. 375

Syndrome	Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Traumatic disorders	Safety	Remembrance & mourning	Reconnection including childhood sexual abuse
Hysteria (Janet 1889)	Stabilization symptom-oriented treatment	Exploration of traumatic memories	Personality-reintegration rehabilitation
Combat trauma (Scurfield 1985)	Trust, stress-management education	Re-experiencing trauma	Integration of trauma
Complicated self, post traumatic stress disorder (Brown & Fromm 1986)	Stabilization	Integration of memories	Development of drive integration

SAFETY

Because sexual abuse robs a child of a sense of power and control, its restoration is the first principle in aiding recovery. Safety in all dimensions of the individual must be developed for the survivor to begin to heal. Without feeling safe the survivor of prolonged abuse, and especially that which occurred in childhood, cannot begin the difficult work of unearthing and telling his or her story. With the diagnosis of recent trauma to child or adult, the establishment of safety is more straightforward. For survivors of all types of sexual trauma, the naming of symptoms and feelings allows the victim to take post traumatic symptoms more in stride. Knowledge reduces fear; knowledge empowers.

Remembrance and Mourning

This work is hard. It seems infinitely painful. The survivor begins to tell the truth. The survivor moves further out of the anesthetic of denial, of *numbing,* of drugs and alcohol, and faces the painful reconstruction of the trauma story. The aberrantly encoded memories begin to synchronize and the story comes to have chronology, pictures, and sound. Sometimes it moves so slowly there seems to be no progression at all. At other times the pace threatens to overwhelm and re-traumatize so much flooding of memory occurs.

The survivor, finally, through facing the truth, is able to mourn. Sometimes it feels like there is no emotion other than sadness. The helpers and supporters of the victim are crucial. Healing does not happen in isolation. The lost self must be mourned. This mourning is particularly hard when abuse began early in life before the personality was really formed.

Reconnection

The traumatic events of the past no longer have such power to predict the future. Their haunting of the present diminishes. Old terrifying symptoms don't leap into the middle of the day so frequently nor with the power to paralyze. The old self has been mourned. Relationships have been tested and changed, including those within the self. But if the survivor is to reclaim her (or his) world a new self must be formed, new connections with others made, and new faith found. They are on the brink of an exotic new land called everyday life and must learn how to move about within it. The tasks are formidable but there is excitement in discovering that within everyday life there is something called future. The survivor learns that active engagement with others is key to moving on.

Tidy, linear progressions don't exist. There are periods of great discouragement when issues that seemed fully resolved come back again and again. Healing is a spiral, open-ended but with a gradual movement toward wholeness. Sometimes safety needs have to be re-established. New periods of seemingly endless tears and fears may be around the corner but overall the survivor has a sense of hope. There has been healing.

Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH)

HOLLOW WATER

> A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it is done no matter how brave its warriors or how strong its weapons. *Cheyenne proverb*

> When you look at the history of our community, women did not start drinking until the sixties. That's when our community started to go downhill. Prior to that the women were holding everything together.[126] *Berma Bushie*

Hollow Water and the three surrounding Metis communities comprise a total of about a thousand people located on Lake Winnipeg a few hours drive north-east of Winnipeg. The community reflects its history of colonization and the resultant trail of demoralization and despair. Even comprehending the enormity of the healing task within Hollow Water is difficult. Consider the following:

- sexual abuse in the Hollow Water communities has been endemic for several generations and intensified in the 1960s.
- estimates of victims of childhood sexual abuse are three of four individuals.
- estimates of rates of victimizers are one in three individuals.
- virtually no community member has been untouched by victimization.
- many of today's offenders were yesterday's victims.
- all victims were aquatinted with or related to their abusers.
- in contrast to the patterns of sexual abuse observed elsewhere, Hollow Water has a relatively high percentage of female victimizers. Elsewhere, offenses by females are considered to occur rarely.

Over ten years ago when most Canadian communities still denied both the prevalence and the cost of sexual abuse, Hollow Water began its search for healing which evolved into Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH). CHCH is an innovative healing approach which is very different from treatment models within the mainstream justice system. The process holds offenders accountable to their communities, and fosters healing for all — those victimized, their victimizers, and the community. The following sections outline some key ways in which this approach differs from the mainstream western models. First,

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126 Berma Bushie, Joyce Bushie. Reflections. p. 1

however, it is important to note that Hollow Water's achievements began through the courage of its children.

Achievement Begins with Disclosure

> There is a strength in us that we ourselves have not yet recognized. *Poundmaker 1842-1886*

> The 70's were really crazy. ... Where were the children? They were forgotten. ... In the early 80's a few of us decided to sober up. ... At first we were saying alcoholism was the problem; child neglect was the problem; kids dropping out of school was the problem. The more we learned about ourselves, the more we learned about our community. Those were awesome times that sent us deeper. Then we started touching on sexual abuse.
> *Berma Bushie*

Achievement begins when children are able to disclose abuse. The CHCH team had done a lot of preparatory work but as Berma shows in the following quote the enormity of the problem, as the disclosures began, threatened the community, even those most involved in the search for healing:

> As we began our own healing journeys we came to a place where we had to turn to our children. We did not have the strength to want to make the community because this has been a silent community that perpetuated the abuse from generation to generation. There was a lot of fear. There was no way people were going to talk about what had happened. ... When we began to open up it was the children that took up the fight. I am always awed by the strength and courage of our children. ... They are the ones that have the strength, and the desire, that have the faith, that have the spirit to open things up. It was those children that came to our rescue because we had come to a place where we couldn't go any farther with our community. There was too much fear, too much anger. ... Once we gave the children permission to talk about what had happened to them, they just ran with it. Then the stories came, and they just poured out.[127]

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127 Berma Bushie. "Transcript of a talk about Hollow Water", Ottawa, Aug. 25, 1994

CHCH Approach — Differs from Western Systems

Healing Based in a Different Way of Knowing

Methods based in western knowledge and traditions do have success. Individuals do have a restored sense of connection with the world. There is healing. The intent here is not disparage methods which are beneficial for many people. The intent is to make known how CHCH works within the Ojibwa cultural tradition. Other ways of knowing shape CHCH. The CHCH approach is founded on different principles — principles which come from an Ojibwa world view and the traditions of *p'madaziwin*.

Euro-Canadian ordering is hierarchical and one-directional. It reflects European worldview. The Anishnabe spirituality and way of seeing the world is best understood within the analogy of the *circle* and an image of the community as a web of meaningful interconnections among kin, the land, and the non-physical world.

"The central value of Ojibwa culture was expressed by the term *p'madaziwin*, life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of health, longevity, and well being, not only for oneself but for one's family. The goal of living was a good life and the Good Life involved *p'madaziwin*."[128] People's commonality was based in a common seeking for the 'Good Life' — characterized by balance within all aspects of the physical and spiritual worlds.

Colonization over the centuries, however, has acted upon the *circle* and *p'madziwin*. Part of what CHCH calls decolonization therapy, therefore, is the restoration of balance through the healing of sexual abuse. In Ojibwa cultural tradition, becoming more whole is connected with becoming more fully integrated in your community. It follows then, that precepts which reflect essential aspects of how *community* is defined form the underpinnings of the healing way. CHCH stems from an Ojibwa view of healing and of community.

An offender disrupts the harmony of more than himself and those he victimizes. His (or her) actions radiate out like a stone cast into a pond. The good life within the community is weakened. The goal of CHCH is to protect the community

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[128] A.I. Hallowell. Culture and Experience. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955, p. 360

through the rebalancing of the offender and victims. The following writings help explain the process:

> What happened here on a small scale was one person disclosed and gave courage to the next person, and to the next person, so that over time, you begin to share the burden. It's your own pain, but it's shared because you're telling more and more people that this is what happened to you and you're giving hope to other people. As they begin to deal with their own stuff, then it comes back. You get so much in return. That's how I see healing in my community — it's that web, making those connections.[129]

Healing as a Return to Balance

Both western therapists and CHCH think of healing as a process and often liken it to a journey. Men and women speak of their healing path or healing way. There are similarities but the CHCH concept differs significantly in several important ways from western traditions. In particular, CHCH conceives of healing as a return to balance. Consider the following:

> [For the Anishnabeg, the number four has special significance. We see it in the four cardinal directions: north, south, east and west; we see it in the four principle elements: fire, water, air, and earth.] We see it in relation to people: the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. We know that in healing we must consider all dimensions. As well, this return to balance involves all that person's relationships — past and present. Further, an individual's healing journey is not complete until family, community, and the whole nation in all of their dimensions are back in balance.
>
> Healing is a letting go — physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually — of our hurt — the hurt that has been inflicted upon each of us, the hurt that we have inflicted on others. Each of us is a victim, each of us has become a victimizer of others. Healing is breaking the cycles of abuse and violence. Healing is replacing, in our day to day living, our anger, our guilt, our shame, our

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129 See Hollow Water Circle

vulnerability, with the seven teachings: honesty, love, courage, truth, wisdom, humility, and respect.[130]

To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom
To know love is to know peace
To honour all of creation is to have respect
Courage is to face life with integrity
Honesty in facing a situation is to be brave
Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of creation
Truth is to know all of these things [131]

Healing is a search, a search for who we are, who we have been, and who we can become. Healing is coming to feel good about ourselves as individuals, as families, as communities and as a Nation. Healing is reclaiming responsibility for who we are and where we are going. The healing journey for each individual, each family, each community is different. The paths twist and turn, go up and down. Steps are often retraced several times before a teaching is learned.

Healing is coming to understand, trust, accept the guidance of Creator and His helpers in the four directions. Healing is coming to believe in ourselves, our families, our community, our Nation. Healing is reclaiming the Medicine Wheel. Healing is reclaiming the Circle.[132]

THE PLACE OF THE OFFENDER

CHCH begins where the western criminal justice system leaves off — with accountability. In the western system the offender is considered to be showing accountability through serving time in jail. CHCH wants accountability to be shown to the community. Offenders enter the process of becoming accountable through healing — re-balancing.

When the RCMP have enough evidence to lay a charge, they approach CHCH who then, with the team and community members most connected to the offender, begin the process. The offender has the situation explained, i.e. that the RCMP will be laying a charge. Then the offender is offered a choice. He

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130 CHCH files, "Healing". CHCH, Hollow Water, Manitoba

131 Jocelyn Bruyere. A Native Parenting Approach. Manitoba Friendship Centres, Winnipeg, Canada, p. 23, 1983

132 CHCH files, "Healing", Hollow Water.

may enter the criminal justice system and take his chances, or he can be charged, plead guilty, be placed on probation, and begin the healing circle work.

Thus, the work begins with the offender admitting that yes, he did commit the offense and yet through this admission he has already begun re-integrating into his community. Throughout he is supported, guided in a non-blaming approach.

RESTORATION/FORGIVENESS

Hollow Water is trying to restore community. Because of the many connections among abusers and abused through kinship and residency in the same place, restoration of some level of comfort is important in the healing. It may not happen ever, it is expected to take a number of years, but it is hoped a degree of resolution will be reached. A victim's life is still constricted if symptoms of trauma intercede in their day-to-day movements within their community.

When the Christian concept of forgiveness is examined it seems to boil down to the victim removing penalty from the offender because the offending one has confessed and shows genuine repentance and contrition. Herman writes, "Genuine contrition on the part of a perpetrator is rare"[133]. She sees the fate of the offender simply as becoming of less and less interest to the victim as the victim moves forward in her own healing. Hollow Water, however, begins from a different set of conditions. Genuine contrition is a goal compatible with healing. From the first disclosure of his involvement in the offense the offender is being guided, helped, supported, and re-balanced, so that he becomes truly aware of his actions and their effects. A concomitant goal is his reintegration in a supportive community and the strengthening of self and community as a result.

In both systems it is acknowledged that the victims' goals are their own healing but concepts of healing in Hollow Water also involve the community and the offender as part of community. Some degree of re-connection is a goal of healing. The approaches are difficult to compare on this point because in the criminal justice system restoration of some degree of connection is not normally a goal while it is a practical one for Hollow Water. Jan Hindman's work appears to have philosophical points in common with CHCH. She notes the frequent close connection of offender to victim, e.g. step-father, father, uncle, but the victim must understand that the offender is responsible for the offenses. The

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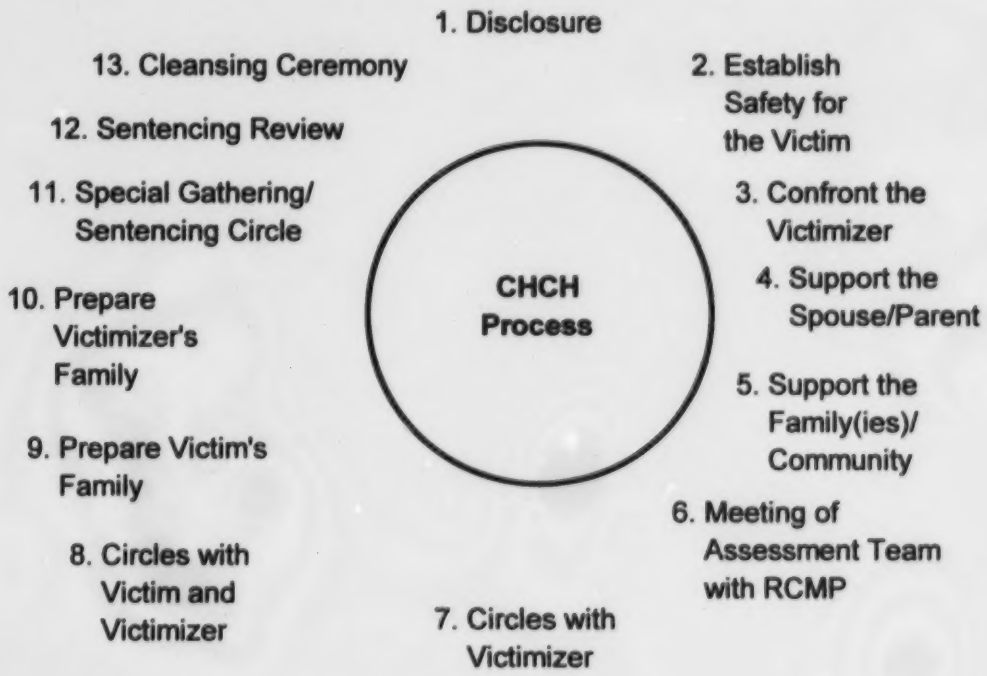
[133] Herman, p. 190

control rests with the child. Accountability is developed in the offender but the aim of the therapy is the well-being of the child.

Community Holistic Circle Healing: The Process: A Model

Following is a model of the circle healing process:


1. Disclosure
2. Establish Safety for the Victim
3. Confront the Victimizer
4. Support the Spouse/Parent
5. Support the Family(ies)/ Community
6. Meeting of Assessment Team with RCMP
7. Circles with Victimizer
8. Circles with Victim and Victimizer
9. Prepare Victim's Family
10. Prepare Victimizer's Family
11. Special Gathering/ Sentencing Circle
12. Sentencing Review
13. Cleansing Ceremony
CHCH Process

Society's Fragile Awareness

Canadian society is aware of how traumatic events, including child sexual abuse, cause devastation. Disclosure continues; healing continues. But the willingness to search for people's true stories and healing remains fragile.
Judith Herman tells more:

> The study of psychological trauma [including sexual abuse] has a curious history — one of episodic amnesia. Periods of active investigation have alternated with periods of oblivion. Repeatedly

> in the past century, similar lines of inquiry have been taken up and abruptly abandoned, only to be rediscovered much later. Classic documents of fifty or one hundred years ago often read like contemporary works. Though the field has in fact an abundant and rich tradition, it has periodically been forgotten and must be periodically reclaimed. ... the study of psychological trauma does not languish for lack of interest. Rather, the subject provokes such intense controversy that it periodically becomes anathema.[134/135]

Denial, Political Will and CHCH

The study of the psychological trauma of sexual abuse leads people to the domain of the unthinkable. All too easily the unthinkable can become deemed the unbelievable. Denial has repeatedly descended. The CHCH workers have to contend not only with the 'front-lines', and their own possible failure as agents of change but also with the prospect that the larger society will not continue to grapple with the traumatic realization that sexual abuse is real, pervasive and persistent. Without a political context insistent upon a voice for the disempowered, the social context needed to break and keep on breaking the silence won't be there.

Repression and forgetting are easier than healing. Healing requires bearing the gaze of traumatic reality without looking down in shame, without reverting to the anaesthetic of denial. Individuals, families, communities, and the larger society can all repress, deny and forget.

The need for funding also compounds the difficulty of CHCH's task. In a small community there are few people to complete all the tasks necessary to pull the community out of its dysfunction and unhealthiness. CHCH workers do not have the luxury of being able to specialize. Members of the team work directly with offenders, and are available any time a disclosure of abuse or assault is made. These people also commit as much time as is required to support victims, offenders, and families as these individuals grapple with the realities disclosure brings. They are all survivors themselves. English is a second language. They are not lawyers. A labyrinth of government policies and procedures apply to First Nations' communities. Funding initiatives shift over time. CHCH must frequently

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134 Herman, p. 7

135 Anathema: abhorrence, aversion, loathing

adapt to working with new government branches and representatives. A shift in policy, a change in government ministers, or the aftermath of federal elections have a direct impact on CHCH. As they attend to the complexities of healing sexual offenders and their victims, decisions made elsewhere strongly influence the outcome. In a political climate increasingly concerned with fiscal restraint, CHCH's difficulties and time involved to secure the necessary funds for this innovative project may well increase.

Hollow Water's CHCH team succeeds because of their deep, intuitive understanding of their community and its needs, and through their respectful approach grounded in traditional Ojibwa teachings. Ironically, the team must also be adept at understanding the bureaucratic machinations of the very systems that caused so much of the community's dysfunction in the first place.

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The Victim Circle: Suggested Readings

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Herman, Judith. Trauma and Recovery. Basic Books, Harper & Collins, NYC, 1992.
Herman writes of the nature of psychological trauma and discusses in great depth the abuse of children as well as the specific trauma of war, political violence, and captivity.

Figley, Charles (ed.) Trauma and Its Wake: Vols. I and 2. Brunner/Mazel series on Psycho-social Stress, Bruner/Mazel, NYC, 1985.
Not all chapters are relevant to sexual abuse but the work discusses psychological trauma in depth and clarity.

Relevant to Childhood Sexual Abuse and Healing

Bass, E. & Davis, L. The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Sexual Abuse. Harper & Row, NYC, 1988.
The best known and most comprehensive handbook regarding childhood sexual abuse. Very readable, it is also often painful. It provides a good overview of the stages of healing thus offering a contrast with the CHCH approach.

Case J. & Hagans K. When Your Child has been Molested: A Parent's Guide to Healing and Recovery. Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., 1988.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison. Pantheon, NYC, 1977.
Foucault has also written a three volume History of Sexuality, Vintage books NYC, 1980.

Hindman, Jan. Just Before Dawn. AlexAndria Associates, Ontario, Oregon, USA, 1989.
Subtitled "From the Shadows of Tradition to New Reflections in Trauma Assessment and Treatment of Sexual Victims" this book gives many insights into the ways children are damaged and offers an innovative approach to treatment. There are a number of parallels with CHCH. A very interesting read.

Holman, Beverly & Maltz, Wendy. Incest and Sexuality: A Guide to Understanding and Healing. Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., 1987.

Easily understood, this book gives good information on sexuality in general.

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Assembly of First Nations. Breaking the Silence. Assembly of First Nations, Health Commission, Ottawa, 1994.
Survivors discuss conditions in the residential schools, the aftermath and their need to heal.

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An excellent source book for men. Written in plain English.

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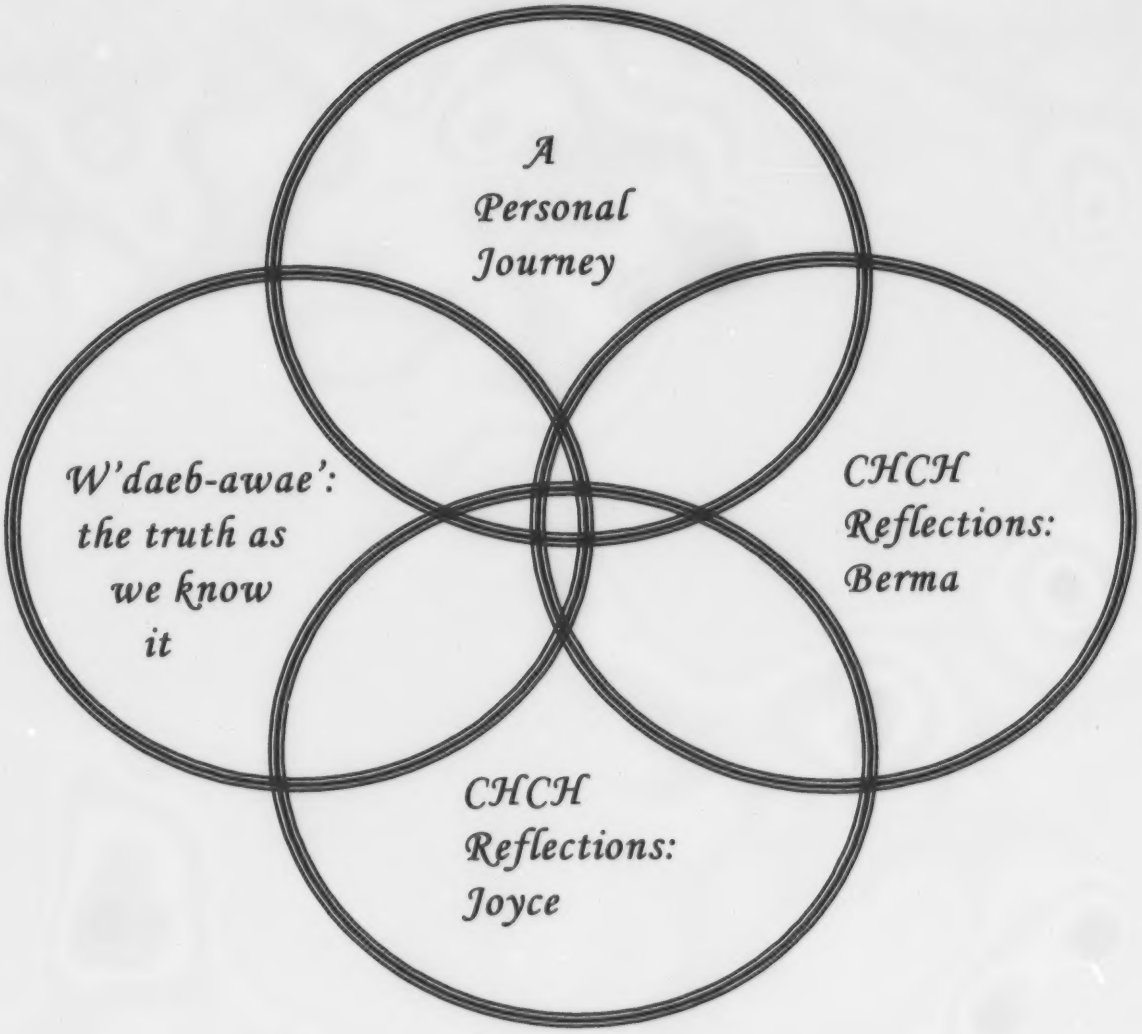
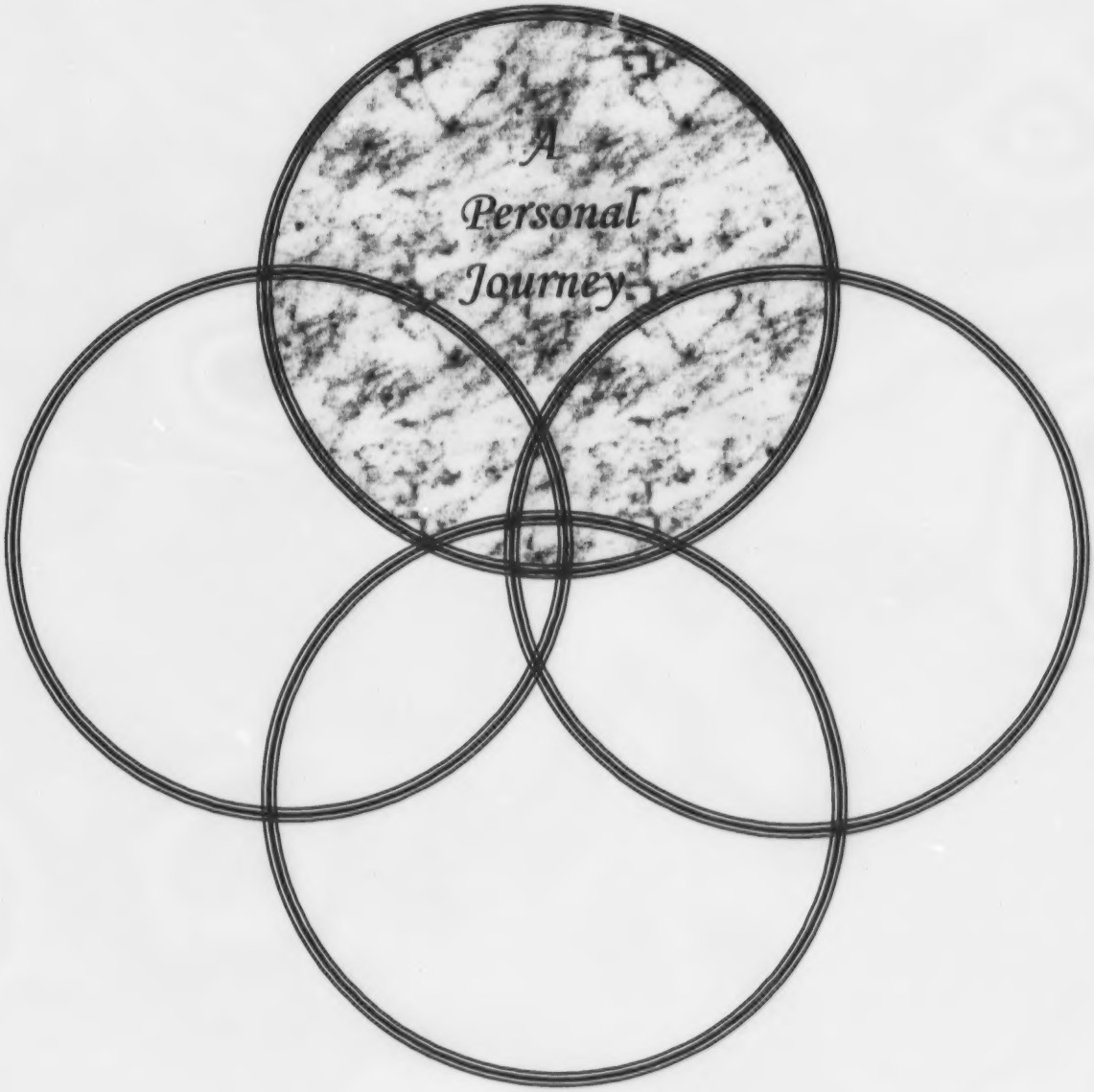
Cardinal, Gil. NFB video, The Spirit Within, 1990.

Obomsawin, Alanis. NFB video, Poundmaker's Lodge. 1987.

Hollow
Water
Circle

Hollow Water Circle: circles within a circle




A
Personal
Journey

Berma Bushie: A Personal Journey

I always have a really difficult time trying to convey to people outside what's happening at Hollow Water. The form I prefer is for you to come out. Come out to Hollow Water and see what's happening there. In many ways I don't have the words to make people understand, so I hope you bear with me. There are so many different aspects that come into play, so many different characters. As a woman in my community it's been very much a personal journey that's guided me in a way that I can personally find community.

I've always been a front-line worker, I went outside my community to get my education but I returned when I was 19. I didn't immediately get into working with my community. I got married first and had my children. I stayed home with my children for the first five years of their lives. Then I started to go out to the community and I was horrified at what I saw and what I felt.

My father talked about our community. In the way that he described our community it was like an alien place that he talked about — this was the community that he grew up in. He talked about how the community worked together, even in terms of sharing the food that they had. In his time, our people were still travelling to the trap lines. Whole families would go in the summertime. They would travel to another place. Whole communities would go. In the fall they would travel to another place. He talked about how the community was cohesive and very attentive to all aspects of community life, even in the food gathering. They would fish and the women in the community would dry the fish. There were two locations on the north side and on the south side of our community where the food was kept. They had community gardens and everybody would come together to harvest. They would put the food away to make sure that they had food for the whole community. My father was born in 1911 and, as far as I can see, that way of life still existed into the 1930s.

I was born in 1949 and I had very little experience of that way of life. My experience was the churches coming in, the schools coming in, all the outside systems starting to come in, and starting to fragment the community. By the 1980s it was a really horrible place. We were seeing more of our women being beaten and raped, our children being abused. With all the alcohol and all the suicide attempts, we lost touch with God. When I started working I felt what would happen. So the challenge we face today in my community is we have to go back to the time of my father, the way of life that they had. How to do that, that's the really big question. We talk about bridges.

Today we are faced with a community that's in a lot of fear, a lot of shame — that's very silent. A lot of people are still very silent about the abuse. The thing that plagues me in my community is the social structure. We have to get back to the social structure that was there. When you look at the laws that governed that structure in my father's time they were very simple laws. The ones that I use in my work are kindness, honesty, caring, sharing, and faith. People still talk about our children being gifts from the Creator, but too many of us in the community don't understand what that means. I think it was understood in earlier generations, but today it's not. I think it's been lost along the way. We also know in our traditions that women had a place of honour because they brought life into this world. Those are the main things that guide me in my work.

I know when it comes to that time where women are honoured and respected and have regained that place of honour, then it will be a healthy community. I know that when our children are looked on as gifts from the Creator, and all the adults in the community ensure the safety and the well-being of children, then I will know that my community is healthy. I believe that we began that process in the early '80s when we started to look at our community, I mean really look at it, and be truthful about what was in there. We started to work at changing all the ugliness. First, we had to start with ourselves. At the time I was 34 years old. I guess that was the first time I really looked within.

The other thing that guides us is our Elders. They tell us that you have to start with yourself, and then your family and your community. They say that you have to look at all the parts, all the different parts of your physical, your mental, your emotional, your spiritual being. To be a healthy person all four pieces have to be in balance and you have to apply the laws of the Creator in everyday living. Those were very empty words in the beginning because none of us, no one in our community, was applying the laws.

The way that my community dealt with all the angryness was just to turn a blind eye to what was happening. My community's way of coping with the social chaos, at least for the past three or four generations, was to pretend it wasn't there. It was a real dilemma when we first looked at our community. Where do we start? Who do we get? We were forced, in a lot of ways, to start healing with ourselves.

I was 34 years old, and for the first time I looked at the abuse in my background. I was molested by my grandfather from the ages of 6 to 9. By the time I was 34 years old I thought about abuse as a dream. It was something that I dreamed that

didn't really happen. That piece of my life was the hardest to look at. The next trauma that happened to me as a child was when I was 12 years old. I was raped by a community member and for a whole year after that I became promiscuous. Between 12 and 13 it felt like I was sexually addicted. My behaviour was chaotic and very suicidal. I know all the different places that I would go along the cliffs every time I slept with a boy. I know exactly each spot where I would stand, I would then come back just thinking of ending my life. I was only 12 years old.

Based on my own journey, my own history, I began to understand what many in our community are going through. But for 34 years it was all silent. We all suffered within that community. We were isolated from each other and it wasn't until the mid 1980s that we started to look at our own healing. Many of us pretended to have our lives all together, and we went out there and worked with our community. We had all kinds of ideas and all kinds of programs and projects that are supposed to help, but we were really smacked in the face. We began to understand that in order for change, real change, to happen we had to start with ourselves. We had to start healing our own abuse, our own dysfunction; and, that's a journey for all of us in that community. We had to start with ourselves, start to deal with our own abuses, start looking at our own behaviour and how we influence, impact on values, and on each other. The interaction was in total rage with each other because we didn't know any other way. We carried all this garbage inside us. How could we interact any other way except from that rage?

As we began our own healing journeys we came to a place where we had to turn to our children. We did not have the strength to want to make the community better because this had been a silent community that perpetuated the abuse from generation to generation. There was a lot of fear. There was no way people were going to talk about what had happened or what they were enduring related to their development as children. When we began to talk about our own abuses and we began to open up it was the children that took up the fight. I'm always awed by the strength and courage of our children. There's not a lot of children in our community. Little children aged 3 to 12 are the ones that have the strength, the desire, the faith, and the spirit to open things up. And it was those children that came to our rescue because we had come to a place where we couldn't go any further with our community. There was too much fear, too much anger. The children came to our rescue. We opened ourselves up, even though there was just a very small number of us, about 24. Once we gave the children permission to talk about what had happened to them, they ran with it. And when the stories came, they poured out.

I think there was a five year period where our community was in total chaos. But again it was the children that helped us manage that crisis because children are very open about their problems. They also have many resources to help them recover. They bounce back so fast. I think we would have been stuck in crisis if it wasn't for them.

We had no choice at the time. In the 1980s, child welfare was just coming to my community. The justice system was coming into my community, and immediately we could see that these two systems were very different. Hollow Water is over here and these systems are way over there. Yet they impact on my community, and they had no way of knowing what their impact on my community was.

We talked for many years, and we're still talking. At some point we said it's futile to talk, we'll just go ahead. We know what we need to do. We make sure that we're not blatantly breaking the laws. We try to be careful to operate within the laws that govern us in Manitoba, the outside laws. The people who work on these systems with these laws that affect us have to understand the impact they have on our community. They have to understand that their laws and their systems do not work for us. They add to the fear that's already there. They add to the rage that's already there.

So what we've done was look at the two systems. In those two systems we had absolutely no say in how things were done. So part of the work that we've had to do was to make these systems listen to us. The way that they handle abuse cases in Manitoba is that when you report, they remove the child from the family and, in a lot of cases, they remove the child from the community. The child is put through the criminal system. That's barbaric — what these systems do to children and families is so uncivilized.

Our children do not have to leave the community. They may have in the beginning when we first started because, you have to understand, this was the first time people were faced with abuse in their families. In a lot of cases these disclosures would trigger off their own stuff and they could not attend to the needs of the child. One of the first things we had to do was train homes around the dynamics of abuse, around the behaviours of children, the behaviours of families, the behaviours of the community, and put safeguards within those homes for the children. Once we established those homes, we were able to move the children from their own families into these homes for short periods, as short as possible. In this way there was time to work with the family to make them understand that what

happened to the child was not their fault. What the child needs at this point is their support. The child needs to be believed about what he/she is disclosing.

It is really hard in the beginning for the children. They would not back off from what they disclosed. Those little spirits were ready to convince juries and judges and crown attorneys and defense lawyers that what they were saying was the truth. Through the children, gradually, the adults began to get a handle on their fear and their rage. It wasn't all completely finished but, at least, we got to a place where they could leave the child. The home and the family did the best that they could to support the children.

Today, the only time we remove a child from a home is when it's incest and we feel that families are not able to give the support that the child needs. We don't have the skills to be able to work with incest families the way they need to be worked with. In all other cases, where it's an uncle abusing the child or an aunt or a grandfather or someone outside the home, even though it's still within the family kinship, as long as the nuclear family can support the child then that's where the child remains.

Child welfare has been to Hollow Water. They've reviewed our cases and the process that we use. I'm sure that there are a lot of situations where we walk a fine line, but so far they haven't challenged us. They've backed off. My community was in a place of wanting to punish; wanting to hurt each other. We felt that the motivating factor there was their own rage. I believe that today if you go to our community, it's a place of taking ownership of the problem. There are still factions in the community that don't want to deal with abuse; that don't want to hear about it. They just don't want to know about it. Through their silence, and just refusing to believe, they impact on families, on their own families. So there are still factions in there that are resisting and they're not taking ownership of the problem.

When we first started it was like walking through a forest. The fingers started pointing. My community was very good at that — saying: "It is not my problem, it is that person's problem". Pretty soon it was nobody's problem. It's been a real struggle to change that. I feel today that probably about 70% of people that we have in the community are on board.

We're challenging child welfare in their policies. We're challenging the justice system because Justice can only offer people that are accused three options: they either fine them, incarcerate them, or put them on probation. Those are the

three options they have in Manitoba. It's taken a long time to convince Justice to allow us to take care of ourselves.

When a disclosure takes place, we have to report it to the RCMP if it involves a child. We do all the police work. In the past when we would report something the police would come and they'd investigate. Nine times out of ten they didn't have enough to proceed with anything because people would just not open to them. People would shut down and they wouldn't say anything. So part of the work that we have to do is to take over that piece. We have to take over the investigation piece because we want to ensure that these people, the adults in our community, take responsibility for their actions.

We believe the child based on our own histories, based on the knowledge that we have of our community. When a child discloses you know the family, you know the kinship system, and you know the histories of those families. Very quickly you can validate a disclosure. We are forced by law to take a child to the RCMP. The RCMP takes a statement. With small children we usually take them to child protection for medical assessments. What we were finding with the offender was once people were charged, then the police took over and the community had no input in terms of what should happen to that person. We wanted to change that.

Today we have a protocol with Prosecutions in Manitoba that states that in any abuse case arising out of our community we have to have input into the sentencing. For the first few years we used to go to court in Pine Falls. It's about an hour's drive from our community. But the community still had no peace. In order to regain these community structures, taking care of ourselves, we had to find a way in justice matters for the community to speak directly to offenders and victims and to the families of both. We have worked very hard to get the justice system to understand that.

In the last six months we've managed to have two sentencing circles in our community. I call them sentencing circles for lack of a better word. What happens is that the court party comes into our community. There's a lot of preparation before the day of court, including training in our traditional ways of healing and spirituality. For four days before and the day of sentencing, we spend some time with the offenders who are going to be sentenced. We start off with a sunrise ceremony. We smudge the whole building. We hang the flags. We bring in the hope that we use in our work. There is the spiritual component that we never ever forget.

When the court party arrives things are in a circle. In the last sentencing the session was opened with a ceremony where the elders smoked a pipe right in the courtroom. From there we use the first circle. We have four circles in a session.

The first circle is people stating why they're there. The second circle is people speaking to the victim, absolving the victim of guilt and shame. They praise her or him for their courage for bringing this out, saying that what happened to them was not their fault. The victim gets a real boost. It's like absolving him/her of any blame. The community hears because one of the biggest things at the gathering is the attitude of the community. For too many years the community blamed women for being raped and beaten. They blamed children for all the abuses that they suffered. Those are the two weakest groups of people and yet in our social structure, in traditional times, those were the two that were most powerful in our communities. It's a teaching process for our community to start acknowledging the children and the women.

The third circle is to speak to the offender because the crime that the offender has committed has not only touched the victim, it has also touched the family and the kinship system. It has also touched the community because every time a disclosure happens it's like a wave goes through our community, and everybody feels for that child. The third round is people speaking directly to the offender, saying how it's made them feel and what their expectations are for that person. The point of it all is to give recommendations to the judge saying what should happen to this person.

We don't believe in incarceration. The reason we don't believe in incarceration is because there's no healing in that place. People cannot even talk about why they're there. I know that because we also do work with the federal penitentiary. We go in there and have circles with the inmates and they tell us this. They talk about their attitudes. They talk about offenders like they are the worst parasites on this earth. We know that when our people go to jail, there's no way that they can even talk about what they've done. That's the reason why we don't put them in jail.

These people need a healing community, a safe place where they can begin to talk about the crimes that they've committed. It's only when people are open and can support these people that offenders interact and begin to change their lives and come back into balance. We see them as being out of balance. So we tell the courts we want these people here. They've committed the crime in this community. It affected the people in this community. It's their responsibility to

start paying restitution for the pain they've caused. They're no good to us sitting in jail or wherever they are taken. It's easy for them to do the jail. We insist that people plead guilty in court because we don't want our children to go through the trial. That's the main reason why we developed what we did in our community because we don't want our children to have to go through that court trial. It's enough that they told us, the adults in their community. Now our job is to make sure that the pain stops for them. Our job is to make sure that the adults take responsibility for what they've done. So we insist on guilty pleas.

Once the guilty pleas are entered, we ask the courts to give us a minimum of four months to work with these people. We understand that when we confront the offenders and they say, "Yes I did it", they are coming from a place of fear. That is, they're not talking about true commitment. We want to make sure that the victimizers understand what it is they're committing themselves to. We ask the courts for a minimum of four months to assess commitment. We need to assess as a community. We need to assess the commitment to peace.

In that four months we have to start a process of breaking the silence. The first step is when the offender pleads guilty. Those of us that work in the field bring that person into a circle. We ask that person to tell us what they've done. In a lot of cases when we start working they can't tell all the details. They can only tell us bits and pieces. With each circle they add on and add on as they begin to feel the support. They begin to understand that they are not being judged, that we're here to help them, that we want the crimes to stop and we want them to go from this place to the place where they become productive balanced people. That is the first thing they have to do, the first circle.

Then we tell them that they have to have weekly sessions with their abuse worker. There's a worker assigned to them. They have to have weekly sessions with the therapist and counsellor who helps us. They have to have weekly sessions with the human sexuality program. We, as a team, sit with them on a monthly basis. It's our way of monitoring the movement, their own personal movement, their own personal healing journeys.

The second circle that they have to do within that four months is to start working with their nuclear family, if there is a nuclear family, although some of these people are bachelors or they no longer have families. They have to bring their partners and their children to a circle. It's their responsibility to tell their families what they've done. Those circles are also on-going.

In the third circle they have to start working with their families of origin — their mothers and fathers, their sisters and brothers. Again, they have to tell what they've done.

The fourth circle is the sentencing circle. This is where they tell the whole community or whoever attends sentencing, what they're being charged with. They tell the community what they've done so far, because at the sentencing circle is when the judge passes sentence for whatever will happen to that person.

We feel if a person can go through those four circles, then we're convinced that he's committed to his own healing and will do everything in his power to continue. If that person is not able to complete the circles then we will honour the courts.

The question that we're always asked is: "Are these people not using you? Are these people coming to you so they can avoid jail?" These are the hardest things to do — to face their own families; to face their families of origin, to face their victims; to face their community. The easy thing to do is just to deny everything and go sit in jail for a couple of months, because in many cases in Manitoba we're finding that the sentences for incarceration are two years less a day. I believe that you have to serve a third of that sentence, so on good behaviour you can be out in a few months. That's the easy way out. I don't believe for one minute that people are using us, because they find out very quickly how very difficult it is to face their own people.

Myself, in my community I have a very difficult time talking about what my grandfather did to me. So I know it's not easy for these offenders to face the community and to face their own families. That is where they're going. We want those sentencing circles to continue to happen in our community not only in the area of abuse but also in other areas, like family court and youth court. All those cases that have to be resolved in and by their own community.

We haven't talked about family court yet to Justice Manitoba. They talk about youth court. They always give us the excuse of not enough time. They say that they have to have the crime rate to warrant courts being held in our community; that they're real short on judges and there's a time frame — all those things. In each of our cases we ask courts for four months, but we end up in most cases getting a year because of the remands. If you start to calculate the time — the court's time, people's time — I don't understand why they say we don't have the time, when they remand cases for over a year. We insist that once we set up a sentencing circle there are no remands. The case has to be finished. In this last

session we had three offenders. I don't understand Justice Manitoba's arguments. When we hold sentencing circles in our community we are ready to conclude the case. It's really frustrating to find systems which leave you wondering who is out there. It's very hard to make people understand.

As our community gets stronger and is coming from a place of wanting to resolve these situations, we will not need judges or defense lawyers or crown attorneys to come and decide what is to happen. My community is not at that place yet. We feel that we still need the courts to help us hold people accountable.

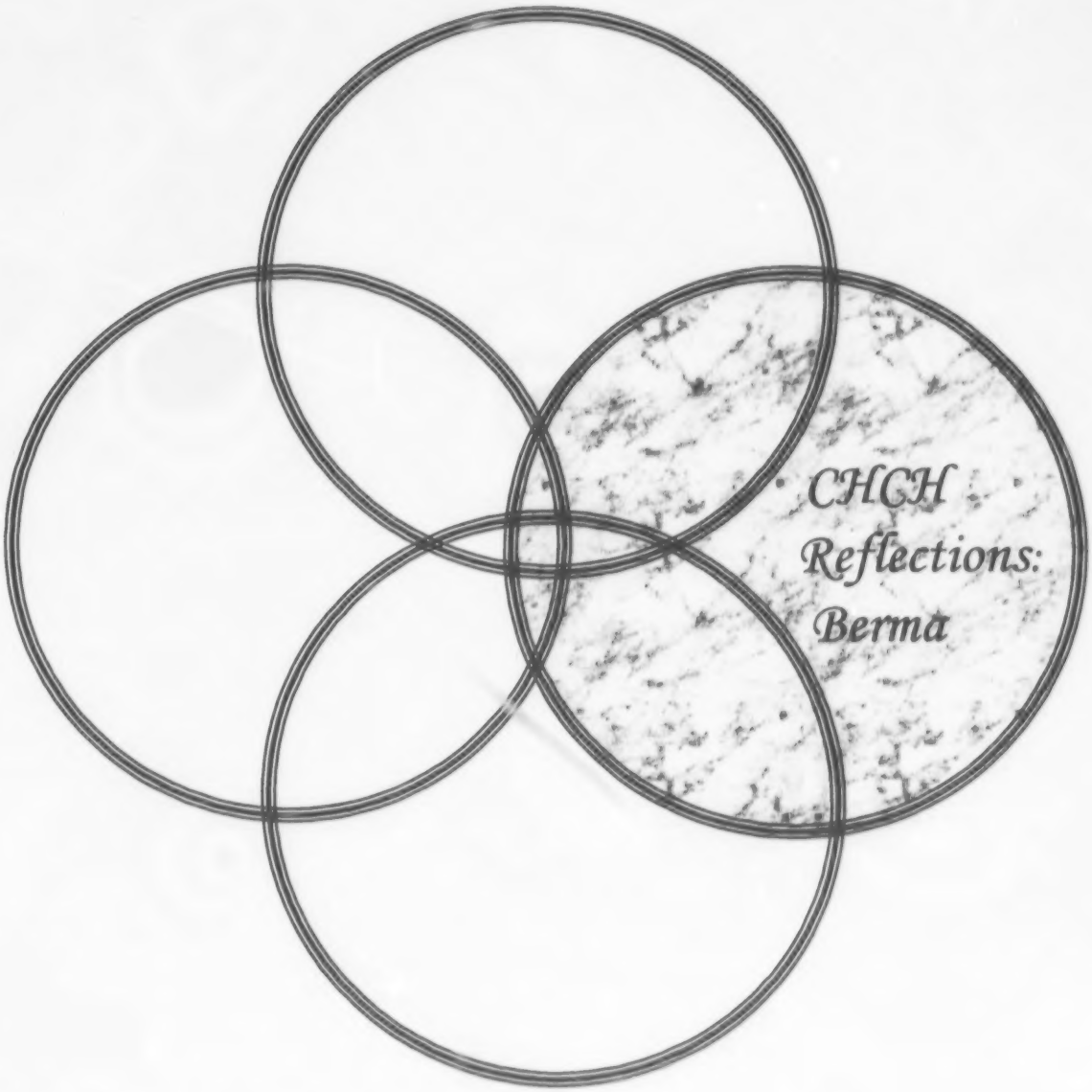
Once a sentencing circle happens and sentence is passed and people go on their way, it doesn't stop there for us in Hollow Water. What we found in the first case was that once sentence was passed the offenders figured they were free. Once they passed court they were free to regress or whatever. That was our experience. We just could not keep these people on track with the healing expectations of the community. They really did a backslide because there were only very few of us that work with these people and there were many cases. We didn't have the resources to keep them on track. And this was going on for six months after their sentencing. Then we really started to become concerned that these people were not doing the work that their community expected them to do.

So we decided that the people come out and speak on their behalf. A lot of people came out and spoke on their behalf. They made recommendations to court that these people should stay here and that they should do this work. They were goofing around with us, the workers. So, at the six month anniversary of the sentencing, we called them at our circle. This time we didn't have the court party. It was just the community. We invited the community to come and get a report on these people. We reviewed what was said in court — all the recommendations that went to court. We have to prepare what they call a pre-sentence report for the courts. After six months we reviewed that document and we gave a report as to their healing work in the past six months. We were very truthful with the community that we were really having a rough time keeping these people on track. They had to answer back to their community, not to us, but to their community because their community had spoken on their behalf. We're finding that this really keeps people on track when they realize that every so often we're going to go back to the community to report.

It is through the courts they only have three years but we always ask for five years. I don't know why we keep banging our heads against a brick wall. We

hope that within five years that we will have an impact on these people so they begin to help us. They become resources for the community. They begin to help us in dealing with the problems. For a five year period every six months they will be reporting back to the community as to their progress or non-progress. We are moving in that direction. Probably there will be a small component where we still use the courts, but as our community comes to a place of wellness, they come from a place of wanting real change and supporting their own people. I don't know if they'll let us get away with that. But I think it will be a real challenge to the system to listen to communities and have faith in communities. So that's our ambition.

Ed. Note: *This is an edited transcript of a talk given by Berma Bushie to a Focus Group on Community Corrections and Development convened by the Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit of Solicitor General Canada in August, 1994.*


CHCH
Reflections:
Berma

CHCH Reflections - Berma Bushie

The Beginnings

The beginnings were in the community in the early eighties. Back then, what we were faced with was alcohol abuse at its highest point. You could find a party in the community any time of the day and any day of the week.

There was violence between men. There were gangs back then. There was also violence against women, both physically, sexually, mentally and psychologically. But the physical violence and sexual assaults were the most visible. Where were the children? They were forgotten. It became really difficult for grandmothers because they were left with the children. When you look at the history of our community, women did not start drinking until the sixties. That's when our community started to go downhill. Prior to that the women were holding everything together.

So the seventies were really crazy. In the early eighties a few of us decided to sober up. Our community was in crisis, and the question was where to start? It was such a big problem in all areas and just a very few people were talking about what was happening and trying to address the problems. In the early eighties we did a lot of talking, did a lot of crying, and slowly, over time, more and more people came together.

By the mid-eighties, I think we had about twenty-four people. We did a lot of planning. We did a lot of training for the team. We weren't exactly sure where we were going to start from. As employees of the band, one of the things we had to do was run beer gardens and take care of the money because we were the sober ones. It was horrible, I think that's the worst that we ever got to.

Many communities were in the same situation at that time. There wasn't as much organized to support a community. We had to look hard to find the people who could help.

First we looked to the band employees. At the time we were seeing those positions as having a responsibility to the community. They were paid to serve

their community, and so we started bringing people together. Two men were instrumental in the program — they were a force. There were lots of people like that. We pulled in people from the church, we attempted to pull in people from school. But school was always very difficult to draw in.

I think it very much depends on the leader at the school, the principal. Back in the late eighties, '85 or '86, we had a principal there that totally believed in community initiatives. He saw the school as being a part of the community. He would come to all our training, come to all our meetings, plus run the school. I see today, with the present principal, that a lot of these things are going to happen. When that other principal was here, he was very good. He attended all our meetings, all the band meetings. He was giving a lot of information about the school administration and the programming that was going on. So the community really got a lot of information, and I think we were starting to feel like we had a role to play in the school. He was very good, and to me that's the kind of people we need at the school.

In choosing a principal there is a school committee who can try to pick someone who realizes the school is part of the community. Our school takes the children from four communities — Hollow Water and three other surrounding Metis communities. On the school committee there is representation from all four communities and Hollow Water has the highest representation. We have three people and all the others have two. So we definitely have a say in what happens at the school through our representation.

In the eighties we felt there were so many things to address and so much of our own stuff to address. Our intent was to try and make the employees accountable, sober them up, do the job that they're paid to do. Over time, when I look back, it just feels like someone was leading us down this road. It was very much felt in the circles that we used. We didn't plan to start using our traditional ways, we just kind of stumbled and my impression of what happened to us is we were being lead, being shown, what methods to use. People were brought into our path to help us, and so each year we were moving closer and closer to the core of the problem. At first we were saying alcoholism was the problem; suicide was the problem; child neglect was the problem; kids dropping out of school was the problem. The more we learned about ourselves, the more we learned about our community. Those were awesome times that sent us deeper.

Then we started touching on sexual abuse. I always remember one workshop we had where there were sixty people. All of the front line workers were there from the four communities. There were church workers there, single moms and the general membership was there. It was there that we couldn't ignore the problem any more because we were faced with actual numbers. For the first time we were able to talk about the sexual victimization of our past as children, and as young people in this community. It was not one incident. There were multiple incidents, multiple abusers. Many of us started off as victims, as children. By the time the survey came, we had moved on to become victimizers, either of ourselves, our families, or others. The stats were very shocking. Breaking that silence for the first time was very shocking, and I think we all knew it was a crisis.

People disclosed because of all the work we had been doing and because people had sobered up. We were dealing with the symptoms I talked about. A lot of us have gone down that road of abusing alcohol to numb the pain. Thoughts of suicide were never far away from our minds, so we had traveled that road, and we knew what the symptoms were. We came to realize that a lot of the stuff we had to deal with goes back to our childhood.

It was a journey that took probably four or five years. It started with people coming together in '83. The team really came together, really gelled in '83, and for the next three years it became deeper and deeper. Its a process, a journey. Its not something that you can walk up to a community and say 'Who was abused?'

We were starting to trust each other, and starting to talk about our own journeys. Then we started to connect personally. There were two people that I always turned to at times when I was at the edge, close to taking my life. This happened at twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and at twenty. I know exactly the times when I was at the edge of taking my life. I had two friends that I could go to, and tell every detail of whatever was happening with me. So when we started coming together, those two friends were there and so they already knew what was driving us. I think each one of us has someone, as we're growing up, someone that kept us going. And for a lot of us, there were those people, so we could really come together.

I always remembered the incidents of the abuse. I knew all my abusers, but I could not talk to my mother. I could not talk to my father. The only ones I could talk to were those two friends, and I know that they had the same experiences.

So for me growing up, part of the journey has been, I think, getting the courage and having the trust in someone to turn around and say 'yeah, I really did that.' I really think I'm just now integrating, that that all happened to another little kid. And this kid had to survive — couldn't have anything to do with that kid. I really think I just sort of separated myself out. If you had said to me when I was twelve, 'were you sexually abused?' I would have said 'what are you talking about?' and when I said it, I wouldn't really have known.

I remember saying that it had happened to someone else. I really disconnected from my body, but I didn't know at the time that that's what I was doing. It wasn't until I started going back to my traditional ways, and talking about the four parts of a person — physical, spiritual, mental, emotional that I realized that those four parts were all over the place — they weren't contained. I had no knowledge that that was the state I was in. It was only going back to the sweat lodge, going back to ceremonies that I began to understand teachings. I tried to apply them to me, but I couldn't because this person was totally disconnected.

It got to the point where I would eat and eat and eat and never know that I was full. Or I would go for days without eating and not know I was hungry. I was totally disconnected. I would hear knowledgeable people like psychologists and a psychiatrist, and people like that, talk about disassociation or different theories to the point where people would not have any feelings if they were in pain. So I was constantly testing. I would pinch myself — 'oh, that's not me, I can feel this'.

What helped me realize where I was at was going back to my traditional ways. I could not buy the contemporary answer that some healing was offering to help me understand what was happening to me. It didn't fit. It just went in one ear and out the other, because it just didn't make sense, and I had no way of relating myself to that.

I had to go back to my own ways. That's what helped me put myself together. I talked to a lot of Elders about what happens to the spirit when a child is assaulted that way. What they say is that we lose the spirit. I have been looking at my community for a long time. The weakest piece in the community is the spiritual.

Then we started to use all these drugs and alcohol, pills and whatnot to numb the pain; compounds that separate us from our spirit. One Elder made the analogy of a clean home — do you like to live in a clean home? He made a comparison of what it feels like being a clean home or a dirty home. Your spirit's home is your body, so if you are putting all this bad stuff in your body, does your spirit want to live there?

We find that going back to our traditional ways — it's not a nine-to-five thing, it's not Monday to Friday thing, its an all-time thing. If you want to live in balance, and all four parts to be in balance, and your spirit to wants to stay in a clean home, then it's an all-time, seven-day-a-week thing.

There is definitely a reason why my community was chosen to deal with this problem. It's a problem that's throughout aboriginal country. We really believe that we are instruments of the creator, of our grandfathers and grandmothers. I think that for our people it's time to heal from all this.

Its time to turn the tide around. I really feel privileged that my community has taken on the task to show others. I think what my community has to offer is that hope to other communities because we were at the same level in our journey. We came from the same place where communities are still stuck today.

What happened here on a small scale was one person disclosed and gave courage to the next person, and to the next person, so that over time, you begin to share the burden. It's your own pain, but it's shared because you're telling more and more people that this is what happened to you and you're giving hope to other people. As they begin to deal with their own stuff, then it comes back. You get so much back in return.

That is how it works. That's how I see healing in the community — it's that web, making those connections. That's exactly what has happened amongst the women here.

I was talking to a younger woman about a larger scale, and what she said was, exactly the same thing is happening as what I see happening in my community with that web and that sharing of the burden. It can happen at a national scale where each community has its own gift to offer. I've been out to her community. Her Elders had started to practice the traditional ways. Most of their Elders were

a lot stronger than ours so she can offer that help to us over here. In this way there is that sharing of burden, the burden of this big problem. It can happen nationally, but I just never saw it before.

As a child, when you are traumatized by grandfathers, uncles, and the general community members, they're all much bigger than you. They can squash you, which is their web. That's how it feels as a child. So because you're stuck back there as a child, you bring all those fears into your adult life. When you start to talk about what's happened to you, you go through all that trauma of trying to put your abuser into a perspective. It's very hard to do because in your mind, and in your trauma, they're these giant things that can really squash your life.

That's what a lot of the women in my community had to face. Through the circle the women have really gained a lot of their strength, and they're reclaiming their place of honour. That's where we're going. I know that my community is healed when I see that the men really show respect to women and that the women have reclaimed their place in the community. They have become the governors of the community, like it was in our past. I know my community is healed when all the adults in this community begin to look after the children and begin to treat them like gifts from the Creator. Those are the teachings in our culture, and we know what we are supposed to do, it's just that we have to get rid of the part that we have carried. Get rid of more garbage. Then we can claim our place as women and all of us will be better at looking after our children.

My generation has had a taste of that — how children are supposed to be looked after. Physically, there were still some of those teachings that were still there in my childhood when I could walk into any home and I would be fed; if I did anything wrong, anyone in the community would correct me. Everybody had a responsibility to the children. So there were parts of it still alive in my childhood. It's just that there was also this dark secret and it affected the family unit.

People from the outside community explained these things but their methods are different. Elders use circles. They build those supports around you. So when you are dealing with your childhood traumas, the safety net is there. The supports are there. You are not there alone with a therapist. You're not going to walk out of this alone. You're not going to be walking down the road alone, like you would with a therapist.

My friend, J., talks about how she tried the western methods and she ran into the same problem. I just went to a few sessions and I probably could have gotten help, but what scared me was, I got in touch with my rage and for the first time, I became aware of how terrifying it was. I couldn't make myself go back to a therapist, because I'm going to be there alone, and I am going to be touching this terrible thing inside me, and I'm going to be walking away alone.

I can't do any work through the western methods. It's just too much. I have to do my work through the traditional way. I have to use the circle. I have to have people that care about me and know they care about me. I want them there to help me through whatever it is I have to deal with. I can't do it any other way. For a lot of us here, because we live in this community, this is where our pain is. This is where we face it every day. Our Elders teach us that you can go into the sweat lodge. You can give it away, give it to grandfathers, give it to the water, give to Creator.

I find that through the sweat lodge, that's my highest time to connecting with Creator. I can really open myself up in the sweat lodge. It's very safe. I can just release and take from me. I don't need it any more. In the sweat lodge, in the circle, that's where I need to go for my five year old.

One of the things we've struggled with trying to get understanding from the western society is the way that we think here in Hollow Water, as a victim and as a victimizer. Once I start dealing with my stuff, I'm on my path of healing. I'll never be a hundred percent okay. I'll never be that. But I also know that on my path of healing, even right at the beginning, I had something to offer others were also suffering from the same things I was. I can take my experience of how I have gone through my healing path and help someone else. I really believe in that. That is my preference in my community because to have someone come in who's never gone through the kind of trauma that we're dealing with here is very difficult.

There's value in the experiential piece — big value to my way of thinking. So to bring in a therapist, a non-aboriginal therapist who's never gone through what we've gone through, while I can appreciate their value and I respect what they have to offer, they will never connect to what we've come through. So my preference is to work with someone who's been through the same kind of things I've gone through.

I'm not critical of their methods, but I think that they need to appreciate where we're coming from. As for therapists and psychologists and other such people, I think that they have to listen to the experiential part of people and see that there is a value there too. I don't know where these people are coming from. I don't know if it's strictly money. Some people say they downgrade the experiential part because people start coming to me and not to them. That affects the money part because it's taking business away from them. But it must be more than that.

I really take exception to those people when they start saying you have to have formal education, you have to have a clinical background, and you have to have all these things before you can start helping people. I don't believe that.

With everything that we do traditionally, the first thing we do is thank the Creator for all the world, all that He had given us, and ask for His help with everything that we do. That's what we do first. Whether we're staying home today and cleaning our house, or we're going to be having circles with offenders, it's an all-time thing.

I started to mention what J. was writing. She's the one that went strictly traditional and she worked with our offender's circle. Elders were there working with her. They knew when to give her time to filter through these things and when it was time to call her back, saying when the next circle was going to be. So she was very strong about using a circle in our community in the work that we have to do. She's teaching us that it's not just circles, and she tried to put it down on paper. The other day I asked her ,'please put it down on paper', and she said ,'I'll try.' But she can't do it yet. This was really hard. It was many more times before I could get this little bit on paper.

She talks about, for example, circles for a victim. There are seven teachings in our culture — on strength, caring and respect. She says each circle is about one of these things. Other teaching, others of the seven may be in that circle, but the circle would depend on the victim's need, and would somehow shape itself.

Then when you bring the victim and the offender together in a circle, they have to go through those things again, and the same thing happens when you bring the victims and their families together. So there's always an order to the circles. It's based on the teachings. I never realized that before either. I always just thought, 'well, it's time to have a circle.' I never really paid attention to the teachings and how they were. I could see honesty being played out. I could see

kindness. I could see respect, humility, and strength. I never paid attention to what was actually happening to the people. I've always marveled that we've never experienced burn-out in this community among the workers. I mean we get pretty ragged sometimes, but we never burn out.

Our meetings are a form of circles, we always smudge, we always pray. We're very careful about starting our meetings with a prayer, ending with a prayer, and asking the Creator's and the grandfathers' help for that whole day. If we use an agenda, we start and we finish, and the meeting is over when the agenda is finished.

It is the same with our circles. They could last anywhere from an hour to a day. In one family circle we started at five o'clock. The young man was in custody and they could only bring him as far as Winnipeg, so we had to take people from here to Winnipeg. We managed to get space. So we started the circle at five. The circle finished at twelve and we still had to drive all the way home.

I understand now that I've always felt the healing forces in the circle, but I've come to understand that's one of the reasons why we've never experienced burn-out. That is because we use the circles in our work. It's also, for us, not only for our clients. Now as J. writes down all these things that happen in a circle, no wonder we don't burn out. We're being affected. We're being creators using those teachings and giving us what we need.

We understand that there's a cycle and we keep coming back. There are things that we don't have the strength to deal with today, but we're faced with them today. We may avoid them or we may find the strength to deal with them today. If we don't find the strength today, that doesn't mean they're going to go away.

The Process

How do we know when to confront someone? We get disclosure, usually from a child. This is the process that we use for child victims. The laws in Manitoba state that there are certain things you have to do. When a child under the age of eighteen discloses, I call the team together, doesn't matter, day or night. We have to act right away because we can't leave a child hanging. We need to hear from the child. We need to put things in place for the child. When it's an incest

situation, lots of times we have to remove the child from the home. It's just too much to leave them in their homes. If its a third party, and given that we've been working with our community for ten years, usually it is, we can leave the child in the home as long as we can determine that Mom and Dad are okay with the information and they can provide safety for their child. If the victimizer is there, we have him/her leave the home, but the victimizer is excluded from the home rather than the child.

If the children are removed, they may feel: 'I did something wrong'. That's exactly what happens with incest situations. The children go through a lot of guilt and remorse, and it's very painful for children when they finally do disclose. If the parents are in denial, that just adds to their pain. That is why it is so important to get offenders to take responsibility, because the pain for children is just so high. So, I call the emergency meeting together and we make sure that the child is safe — that's the first priority. Then there's a team set up for the victim, and the nuclear family. If there are five to ten people in that family, they're each connected with a worker. If there is no worker available, then we look to family and to other resources in the community, like close friends. So we draw in supports for the family, each person in that family. Then there's a case manager identified. There are two teams set up, one for the victim, and one for the offender.

When it's time to confront a victimizer, a group would either go to the person's house or bring him into a place such as the Health Centre, or the church or sometimes out on the land and let nature do its work. Sometimes, because we have offenders who have taken responsibility already, we will go with the team to the victimizer's place, meet in a circle with the victimizer, and ask him or her to acknowledge the victimization. We don't give up until that's happened. Then the team knows, the community knows, and the family knows the situation.

Often the family knows the situation, and come with a lot of information about themselves. The team doesn't come with a mindset about how they're going to do it. They have enough information about the family that they can, in fact, cut through a lot of the issues right away. Having the offender there as well can quickly cut through a lot of the difficulties. The goal is to make the victimizer who is being confronted feel safe in acknowledging the victimization. Sometimes an admission will come after five minutes and sometimes after several hours, but we never give up on making sure that the victimizers acknowledge their problems.

Once the victimizer is able to take responsibility, we explain the whole process. If the victimizers come with us, then we take them to RCMP and they'll be charged. The magistrate will hear their case and they'll be released. Then we bring them back home.

We are with them throughout. We know defense lawyers that we've worked with before. They understand the process, and they're supportive of what we do. We're very careful to hook our people in with defense lawyers that we've worked with before because what happened to us in the past was, we would do all this work, at our level here in the community, and in five minutes a defense lawyer can negate all your work. That offender is so weak and so vulnerable that he'll take what he doesn't have to face, what he doesn't have to acknowledge. The offenders listen to defense lawyers. So, now, after ten years, we have a handful of lawyers we work with. We take the offender to talk to a lawyer and immediately after the emergency meeting I'm on the phone to the RCMP giving them information about this case — what the team is doing. I keep in touch with them because they can't just come to the emergency meeting at the drop of a hat, but they try to come to the next assessment team meeting. I'm also on the phone to the Crown Attorney, that we work with.

We've been so fortunate that all these people have been put in our path. The Crown gave us his home number and said, 'Call me any time'. I really love this man, because he's so human. So many times these people [justice professionals] are cut off from human suffering, I find. I suppose they have to do that, but he gave us his phone number and said ,'Call me any time, day or night.' So I'm on the phone to him to tell him that we have another case. There is already that information when we go and get the person charged. There's already that information to the Crown when we go before the courts. At the first opportunity, once the case gets on the docket, we expect the offender to plead guilty, but we're there with him all the time.

In the beginning there used to be two or three people who would go with offenders to court, back and forth, because we were so afraid of such a strange place to be in those court rooms. Now it's not such a terrifying place. Any one of the team members can go to court with the offenders and victims. In the beginning, we needed to support each other.

Once the offenders plead guilty in court, we ask the Crown for four months. In the four months there are specific circles that the offender has to go through.

The first circle is with the team. At the initial confrontation, there's only two team members and usually another offender that confront. His first circle is with the whole team. That can be very frightening for people. That's why it's important that we use the circles and the prayers.

In the second circle it is the offender's responsibility to tell his family, to admit what he's done to his family. It's one thing for team members to go to a family and tell them this is what is happening. It doesn't have the same impact as when they hear it directly from the member that's offended. So the second circle is with their family.

Of course, there's many circles that happen before these key circles take place. You know, it's not like Monday we have a circle with the team, Tuesday we have a circle with the offenders. No. There's that four month space. And we build as much support, both for the victim and for offender during that time. We do many circles with them before we bring them to these main circles. Not a set number, but how many this person needs. Somehow we come to know that it's time to go that circle.

I remember one lady. They were both charged, Mom and Dad, for incest. There were a number of charges against her two older daughters also. The man was able to take responsibility. We see two levels of responsibility: the legal responsibility is when they go and are charged; the personal responsibility is when they can sit with their victims and acknowledge what they've done, when they can sit with their families and acknowledge what they've done. In this couple, the man was able to work faster than the woman. We had many circles with her, but you could still hear the denial. She saw herself more as an accomplice — it was the husband who did the really bad things. There was a flavour of denial there. I don't know how many times we sat in a circle with her, just the team and her. There was still that flavour of not taking the full responsibility, so we thought we'd see what happens with the family because family also comes with its own dynamic. I can avoid things with a total stranger. I can say it wasn't entirely my fault; I was just as much a victim, but to face my sister, and say well I didn't really do that — you can't. The relationship is the key. There's a drive to want to preserve that relationship, and to preserve it, you have to be honest.

Sometimes, we have to bring in families, even if there are still flavours of denial. Sometimes the family needs to move that person to a place of full responsibility. We've seen that happen, where family comes, because for the first time that woman said, 'this is what I did to my children'. Then she listed all the things that she did. For the very first time she said, 'this is what I did,' and it was because her family helped her come through that denial.

There is the circle with the team, the circle with family, the circle with their victim, and with the victim and the family coming together. In those initial circles, it's not time for the offender to speak. It's time for the victim to speak to the offender, saying 'this is what you did to me, and this how it affected me,' and you sit there silent and listen to all this.

What we say is the first circle is to state why you're here. Then we say the next circle is for the victim to speak, so she's given the first chance to say whatever she needs to say. She's been prepared. We believe that the victim is ready once she discloses. To us, that's the sign that says this victim is ready. We have to build supports for her to get to this point, and to handle whatever emotional stuff there is after.

That's a very special circle. There's only the team of workers connected to the victim and the offender, so there's only the four of them there. J. is the one that runs these circles. She's there with the medicines. She uses the ways that the Elders give her. So the initial circle is very small with just the key people there. Eventually as the victim gains more strength, then the circle gets bigger.

We're guided by the victim's pace. Sometime we may stay with just the four. I don't know how we know, but we just stay with the four until it's time. Slowly, we start bringing in other people for supports, but the victims stay in the centre.

There's another circle also. So the victim and offender stay in the centre. They do their own work. They're totally oblivious to the people around them when get into their own stuff. Certainly the way it works is you can actually see them going into whatever it is they have to deal with and you can actually see them coming out when they start to distance themselves from the pain. They go in, touch it; they can't touch it for very long; can't stay there. Then they start to come back, but they begin to know how to do that. It's really interesting work.

Usually, once they get that point that they can work together. Our circle is there to support them, pray for them, and use the medicines. There are enough victims and offenders who are strong enough that they can come together when teams come from outside. There are enough victims and offenders here and they have enough of their work that they can get into that centre circle. That makes this a training base for outside teams to come and witness this.

We had one man from Moose Lake. He was an offender. Before he got charged, he came here. He was a respected Elder even though he was an offender. He came with a team. When he saw that the victim and offender came together like that, he wanted to come here when he got charged because of what he had seen. He said that in Cree country, up north, that's how things were dealt with before — victim and offender coming together. He recognized that right away. He connected with it and this is where he wanted to come. So he came. That circle with the victim and the offender can happen many times.

The first circle is always the most difficult. That's the one we have to be most concerned about because it could trigger things off. Family members are in the team. You can never separate yourself from the work of your people. There are always things that come up. We're very careful about the support because people could walk away from the circle and they look like they've got it together but then things can be triggered off: Sometimes they will be atoned, really okay, and then it just hits them. That's why we're careful that each family member has a person that they can call. That's really important.

The fourth circle is when the three circles have taken place and we go back to court and tell them, 'now we're ready for the fourth circle.' The offender is ready, we're satisfied that he's coming to his healing, and that we want to take this case on. We know that once he's faced some of his community through the team members, once he's faced his family, once he's faced his victim — there's no way that he can pretend at these circles.

You're faced with the real thing in those circles and if they can go through those three, then we know that he's committed. So we go back to court and we tell the Crown, we're ready to do the fourth circle. The fourth circle is where we bring the court party in; we bring the victim and the family; we bring the offender and their family and supports. There could be supports from the church group, or supports from their family members, and the team. That's usually who makes up the inner circle. But we leave it open for the whole community to come and

listen, or come and sit in the inner circle and participate. If they just want to come and listen, then that's fine too. And we've been fortunate to have Judge Murray Sinclair come in to preside over these cases and pass sentence twice.

The first circle was the mom and dad who had committed incest. That's another thing — we find our community gets faced with cases when we know there's no chance of them surviving in the regular court system. The cases that we deal with are part of the healing because we know if they go to the regular court, we've lost these people. So that's how we came to develop the sentencing circle. I don't know what the next phase is, but definitely the next phase is coming. Now we bring the court party here. We do the sentencing circle. I have the format, the rationale, the structure, and it's all down on paper.

The first case we dealt with started at nine o'clock in the morning and we finished at nine o'clock at night.

In a nutshell this is what happens. Depending on the protection for victims, sometimes the charges will be put into record prior to court, so that that information is not given out to the public, because usually in regular court they read out the details. They have no problems with that in regular court, but in the sentencing circle, the judge is very sensitive to the victims. They figure out what they need to do, but the charges have to get into the transcript somehow.

Four days before a sentencing circle happens, every night we're in a sweat lodge. We invite the victims, and their families. We invite the offenders and their families to come to the sweat lodge. Everybody is in the same sweat because a lot of work has been done before that circle.

We start with the pipe ceremony on the day of court. We smudge the building and smudge outside. We hang the flags in the four directions. When court starts, all that has already been done. When court starts usually M. and I sit beside the Judge. We explain things before the circle starts. Before the eagle feather travels around the circle M. will explain the purpose of that.

The first circle is usually for people to state why they're there. The feather goes around clockwise and it ends with the Judge. When the feather comes back to him, he always opens it up to the community: 'Does anybody wish to say anything?'.

The second time the eagle feather goes around is for the victim. One of the things that we battle in this community is the generational silence, the generational blaming of the victim — that it's all their fault. So the second circle is to speak to the victim; to make them understand that none of this is their fault; that they're praised for their courage; for bringing out his problem. Their pain is acknowledged — how difficult it is to rat on your own family. Their courage is also celebrated, you know. If it hadn't been for them disclosing, their parents would still be in denial or their victimizers would still be in denial. So it's very much their courage celebrated that day.

The third circle is for the offender. This is where the offender needs to understand that he violated a person. But it doesn't stop there, it affects the whole community. I may not be a blood relation, but I live in this community and this is how his victimization has affected me. That's a clear message to offenders that this is not acceptable; that you've hurt a child in this community; and that as a aboriginal woman, my responsibility is to make sure that children are safe. I have to make sure that you, the offender, get help, so that the children will be safe. There's a very long message of that to the victimizer. Again, of course, it's open to the community.

In the two circles that we've had, there's only been one recommendation for jail. Only one. The attendance at the first circle was about 250 people and not one recommended jail. At the second circle there must have been 80 or 90 people and there was only one that recommended jail.

The fourth circle is for giving recommendations on what needs to happen to these people. Two weeks prior to court, we submit written reports to the court, judge, Crown and defense. They're very extensive reports because we look at the four parts of the person. Through circles we can assess where the person is at emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. There is a format of that report that we use where we give all that prior information to the courts.

The last circle is where we give recommendations to the judge. As I said, there's only been one person who recommended jail. Until the day I die I'll remember the first circle — Mom and Dad incest situation. What happened there, I swear I'll never see in regular court. In that circle, an open forum, and our community was there watching and listening and two young men got up and, for the first time, acknowledged their victimization of women in this community by their attitudes and the way they had abused women in their past. I was watching the

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mother of these two men, sitting in the audience. This family had a reputation of terrorizing families in this community. The mother was the one leading her sons and daughters to go and gang fight. You were at high risk in the seventies if you said anything wrong to that family. So for the first time, only a decade later, the two men got up to acknowledge what they had done to women and Mom is sitting there listening. I was watching her body language — the tears coming — that was beautiful. Then the young brother of the father who was the offender started disclosing. He was only fourteen at the time. From the age of eleven to fourteen he didn't talk about being victimized, but he talked about victimizing others. I can't remember the number, but there were many young cousins, boys and girls, that he victimized within his family, when he was between the ages of eleven and fourteen. It was really high and he disclosed all this.

There were also a couple of offenders that had gone through the regular court system in the late eighties who were our first cases. For the first time, they got up and acknowledged their victimizing of their community. For the first time, they disclosed to the public what they had done. Up to then the knowledge had stayed with the team. It was only through them sharing that that information slowly got out. So, for the first time, they publicly acknowledged what they had done. They also talked about the help they got. One of them talked about the first time he came to us for help. He just wanted to stay out of jail. He used us and he acknowledged that. He re-victimized, but this time he ended up in jail. We were still there to offer whatever help we could. When he got out of jail, he came back to us and started working with us. Really working. He talked about that.

Then, just when I'm thinking, 'Oh my God. Please no more. Please no more.' Then the aunt of a male offender, his paternal aunt — they used to drink and party together — she asked him, 'did you ever do anything to me when we used to drink and party together?' And, yes, he did. When she passed out, he had intercourse with her. He admitted that, and he was already there for all these other charges. I was really afraid because there were all these charges pending. But everybody stayed. I was sitting on needles and pins thinking, 'oh my God, what's going to happen here?.' The judge leaned over and he said, 'Is this is what usually happens in your circles?' I was trying to be nonchalant about the whole thing: 'Oh, yeah.' I've seen those kinds of things happen in what I'll call private circles, but never publicly like that.

Of the first two young men, one of them was our worker. The second, his brother, had victimized his nieces and one of the nieces was working here. She's part of the team. So prior to the sentencing circle they had begun to work together as victim and victimizer, and so the work just continued after that. It was very beautiful work. That family has so many things to deal with, so the work between these two people stopped about a year to eighteen months ago. Something happened in the family so that they couldn't continue the work, and they turned on each other too. But I feel that the work that they've begun is good work. It's that kind of work that's going to bring them back together again. Right now it's not possible because of what's happening within the family.

We already had the young man as part of the team. We'd already been working with him. We eventually lost him to an institution for a few months. I find with teenagers, if they don't have structured families that we can work with, then they can come and go, and they don't have the strength to stay connected. That's what happened with that family. He would come here and live with his brother and family for a couple of months and stabilize. When we first got the family member of this incest family, the rest of his family followed him because of the work he was doing. His family members saw the work that he was doing. He was talking to each family member and we would bring them together in circles. That's what each one wanted for himself. We couldn't provide enough of a structure for the young man to stay here. He had his own peer group. I think it's very hard for young people that age to come into a strange community, given the background that he comes from, and the knowledge that was out there. He could only come for a couple of months at a time; stabilize for a while and go back to the city. He had a couple of sisters in the city that he would go back to. It was really difficult to contain him and that's still the problem today. He has been to an institution and he's asked for circles, the one where he could confront his brothers about what they had done to him as a child. He asked the team for these brothers to be brought to him. That's the circle we had in Winnipeg.

He's not doing any work on himself right now. He's back here for a couple of weeks, then he's going back to Winnipeg. I think that he's getting into the drug thing, and I really fear for his life because I fear that drug dealers are after him. They have come to his family for payment.

Kids need structure. They need supervision, especially kids on drugs. Some of our kids just don't have families. They don't have the love and nurturing that they need to do the work. It doesn't make sense. I think we'd be damaging our

kids more if we try to dig into their hurt if they don't have a stable family. We have to be careful that we protect our kids outside in dealing with their issues. We want to make sure they're safe when they walk out.

The other two offenders, the two men who stood up, have become resources. One of them is in the training. The thing that didn't get resolved is the incident between the aunt and the victimizer. There was disclosure, but never any work. The aunt lives in Winnipeg, and the offender is already on overload. We just don't have the time to bring t[illegible]s together like that.

M. talks about the basis of our creation stories — the connection of mother earth to the sun and to grandmother moon. He talks about the relationship of those three and how it's all in balance, a really delicate balance. There's the connection that the women are represented by grandmother moon and the water; with the men it's the fire and the sun. In the teachings, the seven stages of life — the basis of those teachings are those relationships; how the man and woman had their places. I know that with women, in my culture, at the time when they start their moon cycle, that's the time when they come into womanhood. There's a very specific ceremony they used to go through. It's just such a beautiful ceremony. It's a whole celebration of coming into womanhood. You're entering your next stage of life. You're no longer a child. You are now entering into womanhood.

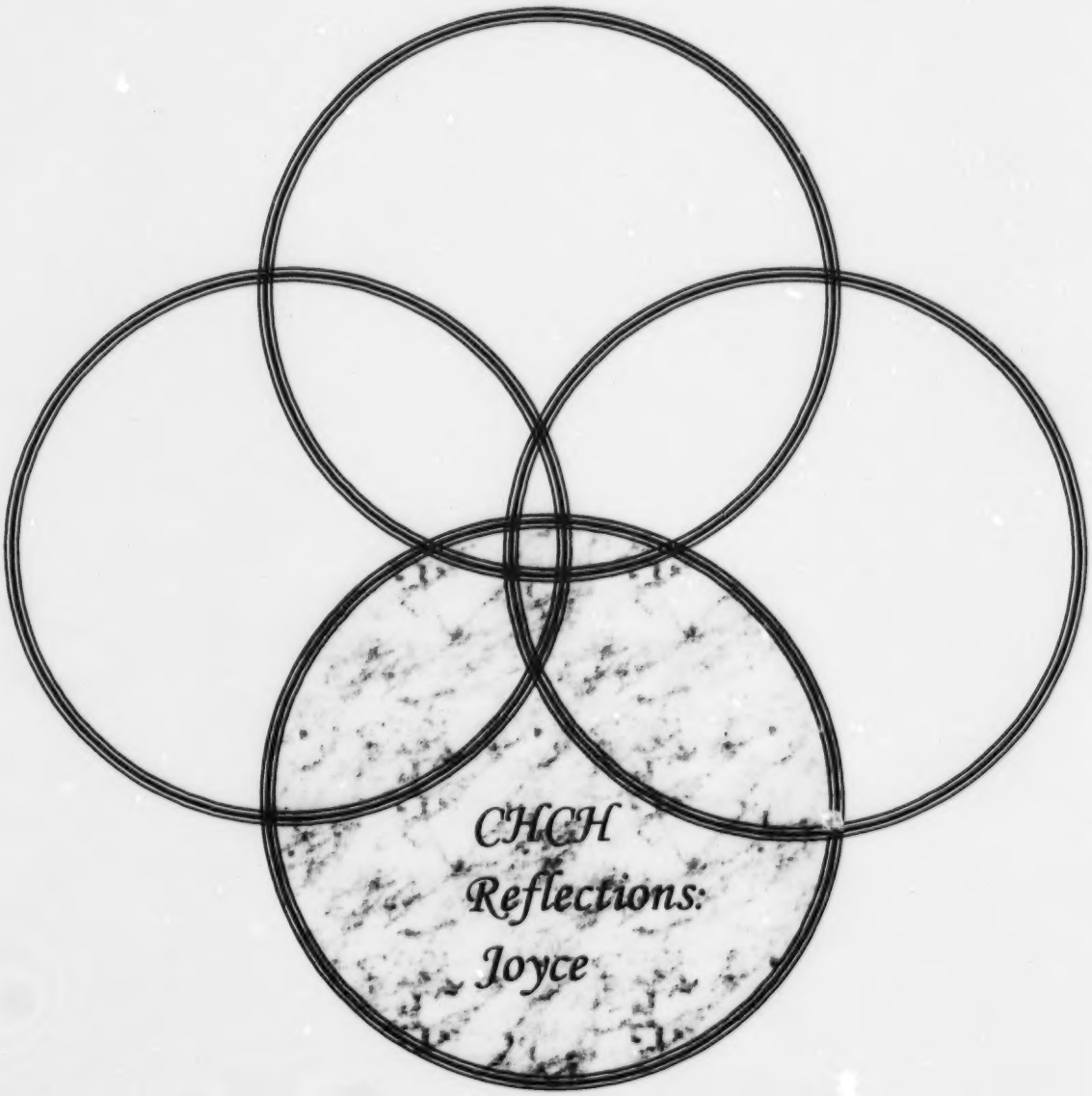
For the young men, it was the same. They knew their place, their role before puberty. They knew exactly what were the rules and responsibilities; what gifts they had. They were put through ceremonies so that they would really solidify their identity. That' s where you were given your utensils to use. Sometimes a name was given. The Elders also talk about names being given. J. comes from the Cree up north, and they have similar rituals or ceremonies.

On your moon time, that was a very special time. That was your own special time. You didn't cook for your family. Sometimes you would even go into the bush by yourself. The women began to synchronize. When there's harmony that happens. Women would go away and it was totally their time. No wonder the women were so strong.

When you start looking at the circle, and how that gave you strength — I've always been amazed at the strength of our people. I'm beginning to understand the ceremonies and their purpose. I can understand why we were so strong at

one time. We want to really build on that identity for our children. My granddaughter is definitely going to go through that ceremony. I didn't go through it. I'm not sure if my mom went through it, but I know that my granddaughters are going through that. My grandsons will too on their first kill. My mom still carried that one on. It's a big celebration, a big feast. None of my brothers have ever done that, only my sister-in-law is starting to bring this back.

My grandfather was one of the last medicine men; one of the last spiritual leaders in our community. He died in the early '70s. He was the last one who practiced. He did ceremonies right up to the '40s. I remember in the '50s, he was still holding pow wows. My grandmother would still hold pow wows. She would always make a big feast. On the day of the pow wow my grandfather would sound the drum in the morning. My grandmother would call the helpers. Grandfather also had his helpers. The helpers weren't just from their family. Always there were four certain families who were helpers that my grandfather used. The day that the drum was going to be sounded, my grandmother would call the helpers, and their job was to go from house to house to invite people to the feast and the pow wow that evening. I remember going with my mom and dad. We'd have a lantern and there would just be a small little trail. It was total darkness. My mom would have for each of us a plate and spoon for the feast.


CHCH
Reflections:
Joyce

CHCH Reflections - Joyce Bushie

The Traditions

Many of our people may have different ideas about the Sacred Circle. Some use circles when there's a problem, but do they fully understand what it is? There are many energies that get drawn out when you use a Sacred Circle. That's how powerful it is when applied respectfully. For example, if there's something that's been hurting you a long time, or an event you can't forget but you're scared to talk to anyone, when you sit in a circle that pain comes out without you expecting it. Many of us have been brain-washed into thinking that to deal with a problem is to handle it in a destructive way, like name-calling, getting even or punishing through violence. This attitude was passed through generations. We learned to live through this. Some of us thought this was normal; that it was right. Many of us don't understand what a leader was supposed to do, instead we put our leaders on pedestal. Anything that goes wrong, they're there to blame. We were programmed to think that way, so this makes us look like victims all the time. Many of us like being victims, because that's our security. We don't understand how to survive positively. We can only survive in a negative thinking, or feeling. This became a way of life for many of us.

Many of our great grandparents did their best to teach our parents parenting skills, but already during those days some of our great grandparents were taken away from their homes and lived in residences. What we don't realize is that great-great grandparents were hurt by the systems that took them away. The main thing that was taken away from them was their emotional needs which led them to become bitter parents . Many of our parents didn't mean to raise us the way they did but that's what they learned from two or more places. Many of great-great grandparents lived in residences and foster homes. The only time they saw their parents and siblings was in the summertime. Some of them never saw their relatives until they were adults. Coming from these families they were expected to live in harmony with others. Each time they were moved to another place the homes had different lifestyles. Our great grandparents, grandparents and parents learned different ways of raising us, which were not necessarily right. They picked parenting skills from the foster parents, residences, and from different church groups. Still there was a lot of anger and hurt in our great grandparents and grandparents. So usually took out their frustrations on their children.

A lot of our own traditional teachings were not even applied in their homes. Many had forgotten their values as an Aboriginal person and their purpose of life. Many did not know how to apply the honesty, the strength, the respect, the caring, the sharing, the wisdom and humility. Many used these teachings abusively and many didn't want to apply at all, because it was too difficult a task to live this simple teaching. Many of our people were taught that traditional values and beliefs were evil. A few of our ancestors tried to keep the sacred teachings alive. Hardly anyone paid attention to them. Some did try to bring the Sacred Circle back. This was rejected by their own people. Many of our people today are suffering the past scars our ancestors had passed onto us. A lot of our pain comes from their pain. Once we can understand this, we can break the cycle and begin the life which was meant for us to walk along with the seven sacred teachings to practice them in action.

The seven sacred teachings are honesty, strength, respect, caring, sharing, wisdom, and humility. These were the teachings Creator gave the Aboriginal people to follow. Some call it the guideline to life. To be honest, we need to work on the four aspects of our being — emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. Without the four, then we can't function as whole human beings. That's why we need the Sacred Circles and the seven teachings to begin to heal the scars of the ancestors. Life begins after we begin to have forgiveness in our hearts. The journey of healing begins when we acknowledge our pain and when we're ready to let go of our negative way of thinking and feeling. Many of us we hurt by our relatives. This could be our grandparents, parents, siblings, uncles, aunties, or cousins. Many times we don't want to join family events because our victimizer might be there. How long are we going to stay away from these events?

'Til they're dead? Then you live peacefully? That is why the Sacred Circle is so important in our tradition. It was a way of life many years ago, before our ancestors got hurt or abused. Many problems were dealt with within these Sacred Circles at one time. People were accountable and responsible for their actions. People were also cared about. People shared with each other. People respected each other's unique gifts or talents. People were allowed to express their feelings, and had the strength to practice all seven teachings. What the Community Holistic Circle Healing is doing is the Sacred Circle. This is directed by the sacred teachings, and show people how to practice and apply it in their daily journeys.

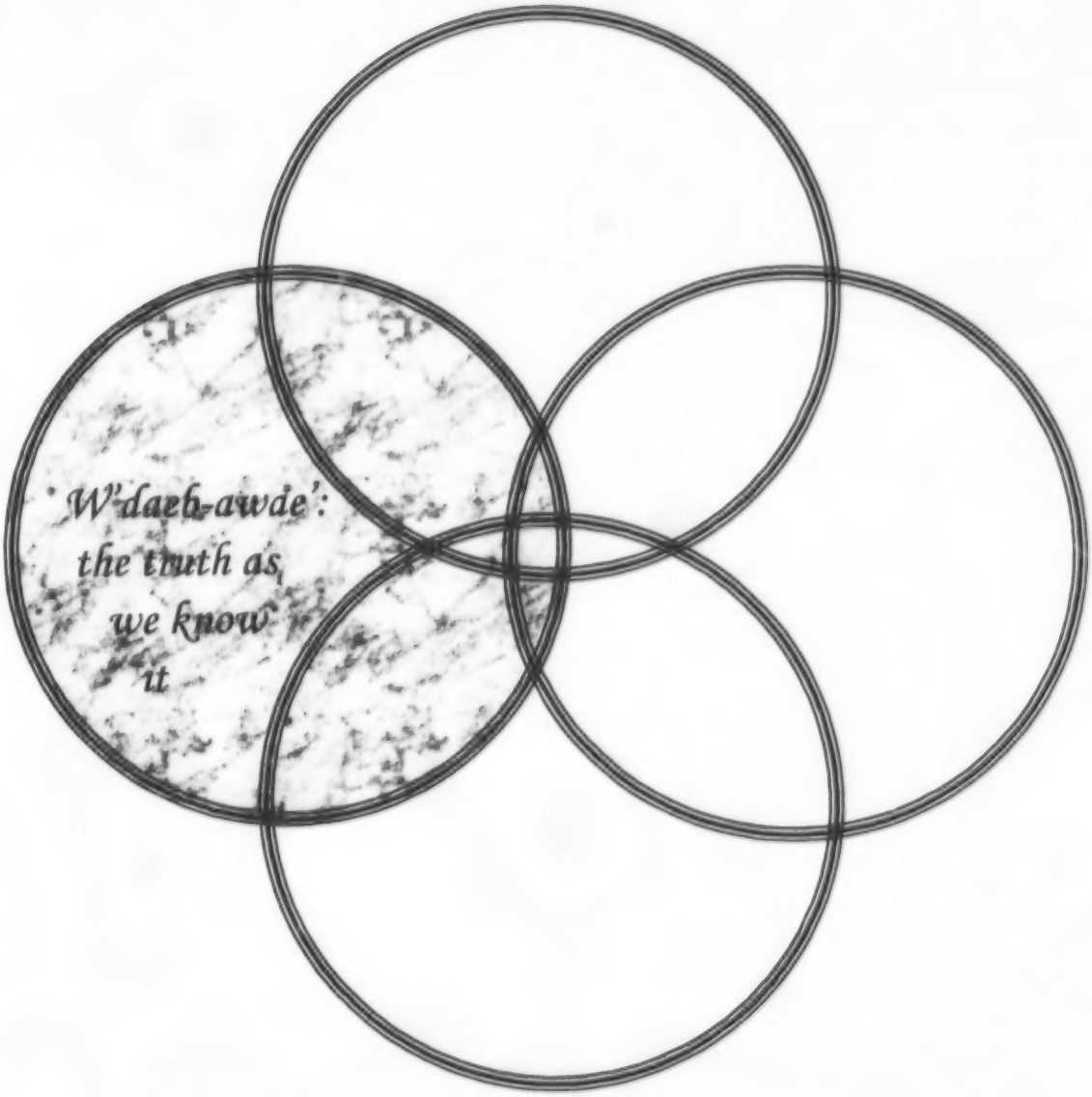
The first circle is working with the victim. If she or he learns each teaching: honesty, strength, respect, caring, sharing, wisdom and humility, she or he is

taught how to use the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of her life, or his life, to practice these teachings. These sessions last one to two hours at least two times a week. While the victim is getting taught, so is the victimizer through the same teachings, in a separate place.

The family then joins the victim and they go through the same teachings. The victim is also allowed to bring family one at a time, whatever she wants. It's for her to decide. Slowly she brings her family, until all of them join in. Depending on how fast both victim and victimizer are working in their sessions, then they meet for the first time to acknowledge the pain, the damage, and the victimizer takes responsibility. These sessions should happen once a week. These sessions usually last all day. They call them bonding circles. When both are strong enough and able to communicate with one another, then the families of both sides are slowly joining in the seventh circle.

The seventh circle is where both families, and the victim and the victimizer get together. Usually this is the hardest one to hold together because the family members weren't quite forgiving the victim and the victimizer. The victim and victimizer usually pull the circle to its place because they have worked on all the other six circles. This is where you see how much both victim and victimizer had dealt with their pain together. Depending on the group, a community event can be planned for both families. This is a celebration of their growth, and beginning of their new journey of peace. In order to fully get rid of our garbage, and function as family unit once more, then all need to begin within ourselves.

People around here haven't done this seventh circle yet, but I did somewhere else.


W'daeh-awde':
the truth as
we know
it

W'daeb-awae': the truth as we know it

In the beginning CHCH was set up for victims. As the process evolved, though, we needed to deal with offenders, and the victim part moved into the shadows. Now, we try to concentrate on the offenders to make sure the victims are safe in the community. The result is that, when you look at the total picture, you get the impression that victims are in the background.

Another thing that gets shifted aside, it is probably a lot harder to see, but when you live in a community you see it all the time, it is our children. We have always seen our children as the ones who are leading the way; telling us what needs to be done, not in so many words, but in their behaviour.

I remember distinctly the times when we felt like giving up. There were many times when we felt like giving up, but it was always our children who kept us going. They didn't come and say, "You can't give up", they didn't use those words, but certainly when you looked at what was happening with them the message was very clear that we couldn't give up.

So we were walking along and then all of a sudden we veered off. If you don't stay connected with victims and children, things won't happen within those target groups.

So I don't think enough is said in reports about Hollow Water about the children, about their courage, about their spirit, and about the fact that they are the ones leading the way even if they are not up front. When I think of my community it has been the children and their courage that has been at the core of the whole movement. That often gets lost in explaining the process.

I think that, as more and more people get on their healing journeys, victimizers are more invisible. When there was no healing in the community, we all acted and interacted, with victims and offenders. There was no distinction between the two. We were all very sick and related to each other on those levels. As more and more victims are healing we are beginning to identify dysfunctional behaviours in victimizers. For example, alcohol and drug abuse are the most visible, but you also begin to look at families, characteristics. Why is this child so angry and just bouncing off the walls at school so that nobody can contain him? Then you look at the family that child comes from, and you understand why that

child is behaving that way because you know the family history; you know the way his family relates to others in the community.

So characteristics of families of offenders are at last becoming more and more noticeable. You can begin to pick them out. We have touched enough families, or know offenders in families, that we can guarantee that there are victims in the family as well as other offenders. So you start to look at the whole family and start to pick out the people because you recognize the behaviour, the characteristics.

Initially, when victimizers are confronted, what we have noticed in our confrontation is relief — relief that it is finally out. I will always remember one offender. This offender, even though he was one of the younger members in the family, he had control. He used fear and intimidation so he had his whole family in the palm of his hand, except for one brother. It was this one brother that he could not control and so he really watched himself with that brother. With the rest of the family he could come and go and do as he pleased because he had control. He victimized two of his brother's daughters as young girls. So, later on, when one of the daughters decided to bring this out in the open and expose the uncle for what he had been doing to her, he really reacted.

When we confronted him we told him, "As we are confronting you with this, your brother is also being told — there is another circle happening with the daughter and the father, and the daughter is telling your brother."

If you can imagine it, it was like opening a person. He jumped up and he started pacing, and said "He is going to know — after all these years he is going to know." There was some fear, but a lot of it was more relief. The way he saw it was by victimizing the daughters he was also victimizing the father, his brother. For his brother to have this knowledge after all those years was a tremendous relief for him. He didn't have to live in silence with what he had done. It would be out in the open. We see it all the time, when they are finally able to say "Yes, I did it".

Eventually the victimizers talk about what they did. A lot of educating needs to happen for offenders and even for victims. When you have been victimized, or you have victimized someone else, you always feel that you are a bad person. You never see how past victimization, the way that the community is, the way that your family is, contribute. You don't see any connections to those kinds of

things. All you see is yourself as a bad person. So, through education, we help people to understand that there is a cycle in the way that they have lived all these years. The silence is crippling, and unfortunately not too many people see silence as a factor in the whole cycle of victimization.

Over time, as you begin to work with people and begin to educate them, they begin to understand why they did what they did. At first it is all focused on themselves, focused on the bad person, on the evil person. Initially, I don't think too many people see or could even say why they did it.

Our whole community minimized victimization. The whole community has blamed victims all these years, for example, a woman who was gang-raped shouldn't have put herself in that situation; she shouldn't have done that or she shouldn't have done this, and on and on and on. Over time, victimizers pick up on that. They know their community. They know how to use people and how to hide. The community was very much engaged in that whole denial process. Alcohol and drugs are also another thing that victimizers use to explain what they did. "I was drunk" or "I was stoned" is an excuse. Of course they pick up on minimizing the whole problem, but it starts in the community. I would say all of those men we have dealt with, 100 per cent have been victims themselves.

We can trace the victimization to our grandparents but, because of our values, we don't talk bad about Elders, we don't talk bad about people who have moved on. These are values from our culture, and it really interferes with exposing the whole problem and making communities see how really bad it is. So our own values work against us. People don't see that you need to be honest to be kind. That gets mixed up with the other values of not speaking bad about Elders and not speaking bad about the dead. I think that is one of the reasons why there is so much resistance in the community; why it is really hard for a community to admit that these people were doing bad things to children. The generation there now, they will talk about it in circles and in small family groups, but to say it publicly is very hard.

We have had only one case where the victimizer was a women. Only one case has ever come before the courts from the community, but we know of many. It is really hard for children to even think about their mothers or aunts or grandmothers in that way so it is still a very big problem. We have actually confronted a few women because their children exposed them. We have confronted the women because we have to report all cases to RCMP. It

becomes very difficult for the children to testify against their mothers. At confrontation there wasn't any taking responsibility — I think for some reason it is hard for women to take responsibility. I think it has to do a lot with what women are supposed to be. They are caregivers and nurturers.

In analyzing our community, I am sure that there were children who were victimizing each other in our generation too, but it is now becoming more and more visible. With my generation it is usually adult-to-child, but now we are seeing child-to-child victimization in the next generation. A lot of it gets caught in the school where children play. We see in their behaviour that their knowledge of their sexuality is way beyond their age. The things that they do to each other through their art, through their writings, the way that they speak is evidence of abuse. It is becoming more visible in the next generation. The problem seems to get worse and worse with each generation. We used to behave badly before but nobody picked up on it or shoved it under the rug. Now, we can't do that any more, we have to face it, and here our children are telling us, they are showing us very graphically what has been happening to them. Children are a lot freer to say what is happening to them, not in words but in their actions.

To assess the victimizer's needs we look at the four parts of the person. Physically: usually there are addiction problems — alcohol or drugs; mentally: there are suicide issues; emotionally: they are like children, afraid and feeling unsafe, disconnected from family and from community; and, spiritually: very little connection with their spiritual side. So we work at the four corners. The first thing we have to do is to look at the addictions because if we work with this person during the week and on weekends he is out bingeing and using drugs and giving himself permission to continue the behaviour through those addictions, there is a problem. So we insist that the person start working on their addictions; that's the first thing. We need to have a person that is totally conscious of their behaviour and what is happening inside themselves.

We usually set up a home program. Some offenders need to go to treatment, but they identify that themselves. Once we get them sober, then we begin to deal with the other pieces.

We are very conscious about the need for spirituality, and if that person hasn't had any spirit, hasn't been fed all these years, then you give them options. There are churches, there are also traditional healers and traditional ceremonies. We connect them with people that follow those ways. Sometimes, if they have

been regular churchgoers, then, that's where we go. We have the Catholic church sitting on our assessment team. We haven't been able to get the other churches involved. We make connections for them around their spirituality. It is almost like showing spirituality to a child. Emotionally they are so crippled that we have to lead the way to a new lifestyle.

Mentally and emotionally — we see that the families are crucial to that person because a lot of their emotional well-being comes from family. It is important for that person to start connecting with family at a feeling level. We do this in the first four months after charging. We ask the courts to give us four months to assess this person. We tell the offender, "We have already told your family and the victim's family about your offence, but it is important that you tell them." So we set up a circle.

There is a lot of preparation that goes into it before that happens, a lot of individual work with family members and also with the offender. But we tell them, "You know, that circle is coming closer and closer". They have support from their group work and their individual worker, so there is a lot of preparation before they come to the circle.

We bring them to a circle and the offender sits in the circle with his or her family. The offender's responsibility is to tell family members what he or she has done.

I can never capture in words what happens in circles, but healing happens when the family, for the first time, can acknowledge the victimization and begin to understand that it is not the child but the offender that's to blame for everything. "Blame" is not really the right word. It is shifting — shifting people's ways of looking at victimization. Understanding that this is not a bad person. We are not here to sit in judgement of this person. We are here to find ways of changing his behaviour, changing his lifestyle, and of supporting him through that process because it is only kindness, honesty, caring, sharing and faith that will help us bring that person back into balance.

There is a ripple effect for all family members. One person taking responsibility for victimization opens doors for all the other members to do the same. There are other victims and other offenders in that family, and the emotional connections begin to happen. We all have families and we all have special feelings for our families, but if we haven't practised, and we have disconnected emotionally from each other, and we begin to hide and not talk about our

problems, the healing has to start right from scratch. Because of the feelings the foundation is there. We just have to help them improve and build, so that family members begin to support and help each other.

It is very hard for the partner, the spouse, to come to grips with disclosure. These people have to be helped to get over their anger, usually through circles. It is acknowledging that it is normal to feel angry. It is normal to feel anger, to feel hate, and to want to attack the person, or just not have anything to do with that person. Those are normal reactions and we tell the family that. We are very up front about all that we know. When we are confronting the offender we are telling him, "Other family members are being told about the situation, and these are the possible reactions. These are the kinds of behaviours other families have gone through."

Our work has gotten easier over the years because other offenders are sitting in a circle, confronting a new offender and telling their story about what they went through with their families. Sometimes when people start to heal, when people start to address family issues, there is a real possibility that there is going to be separation, and we are very up front with offenders, with the spouses, and with the children about what could happen. That is reality. Those feelings are there. They are acknowledged. We make ourselves available any time, day or night, when they erupt. People could become suicidal, so we always try to be conscious of indicators. We take it very seriously when a person starts talking about, you know, "I think it's best if I just take my life" — they don't say "take my life", but "go away". So we are very careful about safety.

We have to be careful about intimidation. If a victimizer has control over his family through fear and threats, his behaviour is not going to change overnight, so we really have to be careful, we really have to know the person. We ask the victimizer, "How do you deal with anger? How do you feel when you are lashing out at this innocent person over here? What kinds of ways do you deal with your anger? Do you ever think about taking your life? How many times? What kinds of plans would you have in place?" We have to look at all possibilities, and we can't wait to get this information through counselling over time.

Initially, when people are in crisis, we ask them to talk it out because we want to assess the risk of suicide. How high is it? What is the risk to other family members? We have to know all that. We are very careful about their safety.

Each family member is connected to a counsellor; so they don't even have to come to the team, they can simply connect with their counsellor. We make sure of that in our confrontations because we want to make sure that the children in that family are safe, they can reach out to somebody if things are happening with them. These children are the most honest. I think the adults would have more of a problem reaching out, but children are usually very good about it.

Other offenders sit in a circle with the victimizer whose issues are being addressed. There is a victimizer's group that meets regularly. It is usually part of their probation. For the first few months, when court is in process, this is voluntary, however, after probation we insist that they participate.

We just tell the person, "You are going through a really rough time and you need all this support. These are the things that we feel would give you that support and help you feel better about yourself." So we steer him. We are dealing with people who are children, emotionally. They stopped growing emotionally a long time ago.

Once the whole thing is out in the open, it is such a feeling of relief, but then very close after that there is the whole fear of, "Oh, my God, what have I done? What is the community going to think of me? What is my family going to think of me?" Very close to that feeling of relief are fears of being rejected and being ostracized. We have to help that person build. We don't want him to crash totally. Our intent is not to crush the person, not to judge. We don't want to add to the pain of the person, so we look at ways of building to make sure that he or she is safe too.

Other victimizers help the person throughout. Right from the time of confrontation other victimizers are sitting there. It is of great help to that person because the other victimizers will remain connected. They know what that person is going through. Even if that person is not saying it in words, they have been there. They know what it means.

There is a lot of weight and a lot of dependence by the court on professional people to know how this person should be treated. They think that we are just bush people; that we don't know anything. When you go before the courts that's how you are looked on. So we learned very quickly that we needed professionals out there that have the words, that could put everything down on

paper and present a little neat package to the courts. Then the courts would agree. It did not take long to realize that was what we had to do.

I still have problems with psychologists. I am not sure if I totally believe what they have to say. I don't discount their knowledge or their skills. The part that's missing in their reports for me is the family component and the community component. They deal with just one person. That person does not live in isolation from everybody else: I wish that their reports would also reflect on family and on community. We used psychologists in the beginning. You learn little tricks on the way that this person can make you look good, can make your program look good. That is the reason why I agreed, as part of the team, to have psychologists come in.

Over time I began to learn, as I listened and watched, how they work with offenders. I think that they have something to offer us. The question is how to match the two. We want to bring more of our traditional ways into the healing. As you read about what they are saying, you begin to match how you think and how you see and how you do things. It becomes an art of blending the two.

Psychologists were used at the beginning to do an assessment and give a number of tests. We asked for a copy to be put into our treatment files. For the first two or three years we had two psychologists, one for offenders and one for victims. They had on-going sessions with them and they could track their progress. We haven't used them in about three years. We would sit with the victim or offender in the sessions. We did not always agree, but generally there was agreement.

It was sometimes difficult working with the psychologist who worked with the victims, who was totally against the offender-victim work we were doing. We tried to say: "We don't care how you see it or how you look at it, the reality is that victims and offenders live in this community and it is a very small community. There is only one main road and there is no way that you can separate victims from offenders. It is impossible. So, if you work with these people in total isolation of each other and they never come together to resolve their own issues, that is the way it is going to be out there in the community."

This whole process was about empowering the victims so that they don't have to live their whole lives in fear of their victimizers. To us, that's one of the reasons why you need to bring these people together. The idea that victims take on the

blame and the guilt for what their victimizers have done to them was not right. Victims need to understand that what has happened to them was not their fault, that a second person is the cause of all of this pain that they live with. Victims need to understand that it is not their guilt or their shame. Guilt and shame become emotional blocks, so the person doesn't grow. We have seen where victims and offenders come together and the victim begins to realize: "The shame is not mine. The guilt is not mine." Over time, through work between the two, the victim can get rid of those feelings, and that's half the battle.

We came across situations where we disagreed and we tended to bow to the psychologist's rationale, which was very convincing. The psychologist could articulate different theories, and was very good that way, whereas we were stumbling around saying, "Yes, but... " We didn't have the words to explain what we were trying to do, so I don't think we were very convincing.

Again it was our children that really forced the issue, particularly one victim. She was a really spunky kid. I marvel at the spirit of the children. This one kid had been victimized by her father, by her mother and by uncles; she had many offenders. When we became involved with her she was in her teens, 13 or 14. She was the one that told us, "I can't talk to you about what my father has done to me. I have to talk to him." She kept pushing the issue: pushing and pushing. So we had to go against the psychologist.

We come across extremely challenging situations concerning what we should and shouldn't be doing for victims. That was a real challenge. To go against the psychologist who had so much knowledge and clinical experience was difficult. It was a breakthrough to listen to our children, because we want to make sure that we follow mainstream norms around victims, and the cry out there is still, you know, "You shouldn't bring the victims and offenders together. You should be jailing the offender", and the list just goes on and on. So you are constantly at war with that mainstream thinking.

Even within our own community there is still the attitude that victimizers should be locked in jail. It comes in cycles. The whole process is a learning process for all of us. You have to be a jack-of-all-trades because there are so many factors that affect your work. In the last two years, for example, we concentrated on the treatment model incorporating more and more of the traditional ways. So our focus was on that. It was like we had put on blinders and we weren't listening to the community. Then you would go to a community meeting and hear people

say "These people should be jailed", and "Why are we bringing these people in here?" You could just hear the denial, denial and downplaying of the problem. When you start hearing that in the community you know that you need to get out there and start doing workshops, start educating people and start raising their consciousness around victimization. You have to deal with your community.

We can't leave our community behind. We always have to keep the community in mind because when a community starts shutting down, then your work is that much harder. People become stigmatized. They are pointed out in a negative way.

But when people are open they know what the problem is. They know what we are doing and how we are trying to deal with these people. If the community is open in that way, then our work is that much easier. We have never been able to get our community to a level where they praise people for their work, though individuals do once in a while. When people come from outside to visit our community, I can see the smiles on the workers. They are so proud of the work that they are doing, because people from outside see what we can't from inside. It is also good for offenders and victims when they sit in circles with these outside people. They hear it from us all the time, the praise and the acknowledgement of the work that they have done on themselves, but there is something special when it comes from total strangers that don't know them.

We don't agree that victimizers should be put on medication to deal with their problems. These people have all kinds of addictions, and medication can cover that up. We don't want to add to their addictive behaviour. We clean them up from one drug why would we give them something else, so they never really come from the heart? As bad as it gets for them, as fearful as it gets for them, I think that we somehow have to find different ways. We don't go for drugs. What we do use is natural medicines. Sometimes we get them to take medicine made from cedar, natural medicines, to help them sleep because sometimes it gets so bad for them that they can't sleep. When they begin to realize what pain they have caused and they begin to connect with the people at a feeling level, that's very scary for these offenders, especially if they have lived 40 years without having any emotional connections. They don't realize how much pain they have caused their victims. When that starts to hit there are times when they can't sleep. In those times, we usually take them to an Elder or we will take them to sweats and traditional healers for natural medicines.

For Christians, we connect them with the Church. We invite them to sweats too. Even if they just come sit outside the sweat, you know, we say, "This is what we believe and this is how we pray. This is how we connect with the Creator, we would like to have a sweat for you and we would like you to come in the sweat with us." Some are not able to, so we ask them to come and sit outside, and we go in the sweat for them. We get them to do whatever is comfortable.

It is in the giving that our ways are unique. I remember the case of the two victimizers that were on CBC. They are both commercial fishermen. One of the recommendations in their probation order was that once they finished their quota, one expectation was they would leave their nets in the water, and the fish that they caught, they would have to give to community people. I remember one of them saying "Oh, I was so scared to go to that house because I didn't know if they would take the fish from me." Her own image of herself was of a bad person, and it was such a lift for her when people would take the fish and thank her for it. Compare those kinds of things with sessions with psychologists or psychiatrists — what it does for a person to give. Our ways are so simple, and yet I think we don't pay enough attention to what we get out of them.

There is a lot of fund-raising activity during the fall months because the community raises money for all the children to have gifts, and there is usually a school concert where staff give gifts to the kids. The whole school staff is involved in fund-raising. Then there is a community concert, and here again they have to raise money to buy gifts for kids. So there's two concerts.

Our kids are pretty rich when you think about it; they get all this attention through the school and in the community plus their homes. The two victimizers I spoke about have been donating to the fund-raising. The other day my sister was saying, "We have had another clock from them so we have to do a raffle for kids to sell this clock." I said, "Another?" "Yes," she said, "they donated a clock about a month ago." They are really getting into community things.

Also, we feel that these two people are ready to go out to communities. I think what other communities need to hear is directly from offenders. In the New Year that's the plans we have for them. The workers will go with them, but for offenders to go and tell their stories to other offenders in other communities is something that we can't do. So, their work is cut out for them.

I work for child welfare. We are often caught in situations where we have to apprehend children from families. Then we are caught in a conflict with parents. Over time you try to resolve that but there is always a strain there. Parents get the idea that we just herd their kids off from their homes for no reason. There is no acknowledgement of what they have done while the children were in there. I think they accept it at a mental level, but from a feeling level it never seems to get to that point. So there is a strain, never quite totally trusting. They will do what you tell them to do but it is almost mechanical.

I have sat in circles with the two offenders I was talking about where we brought their children together. In the beginning the visits were supervised. Before the visit took place we would have a circle with all the family, and the offenders sitting there and telling their children, "The reason you were taken from us was because I did this and I did that." So the children began to understand that it is not someone from outside the home causing the separation; the children began to understand that what mom and dad did was not right, "so I have to be over here to be safe." What they would always tell their children was, "This is what I am doing to try and change my life so that one day you can come back to us. We want you to come back but it is not time yet." So we get the message to the children "One day my mom and dad are going to be okay and I can go home."

You sit with these children on a monthly basis with their mom and dad telling them this. Mom and dad talk about the healing that they are going through and all kinds of things come up, for example, the mom was saying to her children, "I know that I can't talk to you. The only way I know how to talk to you is to yell at you. So I know that I have to stop yelling at you and I have to learn how to talk to you." Isn't that amazing?

That children are hearing this from their own parents gives us hope. Not only that, but the children that this woman victimized (she didn't victimize all her children, only the two older ones) she would tell them, "This is what happened to me and this is how I understand why I did what I did to you. Because I did those things to you, if you don't deal with them, you could also do that to your children. It is important for you to feel and it is important for us to sit together and work things through."

Now they have their children back. They are having problems with one child. The young girl disclosed she has been victimized and she has made statements to RCMP, but what she is not clear on is the identity of the victimizer. She talks

about what was done to her but she can't identify the perpetrator. To this day she has a lot of problems. There are a lot of victimizers in her family, so she has never ever resolved that, and it is causing her a lot of problems. I can't even imagine what she must go through knowing what has happened to her but not knowing who. As she gets into her teens, she is really acting out, getting into a lot of fights, she lies a lot. We have had circles with her family and other family members where she tells lies about certain people and it would cause a lot of conflict between families.

Although they don't want her out of the community, her family was thinking, maybe she needs to be separated from the family and then things will become clear for her. Right now everything is hard for her, so she is acting out. It is a terrible situation for her, and she is in so much turmoil.

If you can focus on the turmoil that she is going through and understand why she is behaving the way she is, you can be there to support her through that. If you lose focus and you just see all the trouble she is causing, it is really bad for her because then everybody starts to label her and they don't understand what she is going through. We may have to bring her into care, put her in a home away from her family for a while just to give her that break and settle her down. There are so many spin-offs of that kind from one incident.

We are currently looking at another psychologist. We found one who has written articles in journals and books. He sees the real spunky kids, the ones that don't conform and just challenge all the time. They are not trouble to him. Unfortunately the school has a lot of problems with this kind of child, so I want to bring him in. He doesn't come from the head all the time. He has really practical ways of helping teachers and counsellors and family members to deal with these children. So I want to bring him in because I think the school needs a lot of help.

The principal at the school is very receptive to getting all kinds of help wherever he can get it. His focus is on education, giving good education to children, but he is also very concerned about children who are acting out — what's the problem? How can the school help? What kind of resources can we put in the school to make it better for these children so that at least part of the time they are learning?

The psychologist I want to bring in has been at the school a couple of times. He talked about working with adolescents and working with difficult children. He has also come in to do suicide intervention, so he is not new to the school. He has talked to teachers and aides in the school. I think that they would be able to work with him.

What has been happening with our children in the school was, if they can't function in the schoolroom they are sent out, or sometimes they are expelled, or suspended. Nothing really happens for these kids.

For the school to identify the ones who are having problems, they have to begin by concentrating on them for a full seven-hour day. This means they will have the kids for those times when the kids can do their learning. Usually mornings are the best time for these kids. In the afternoon it becomes really difficult for them. We would set up a program outside the school for these kids so that they go there in the afternoon. I think that way they at least won't get suspended and they won't waste their time. Yet at the same time they will get some learning.

In my own philosophy I sometimes get into real conflicts with the team because the reality is, it is very difficult to work with offenders. There is no easy way. I understand that the workers are at the front line. They are the ones having to deal with this person. Sometimes they just get tired and they just can't do it any more. However, my own philosophy is that as Anishnabe people we were given laws and teachings, and even though as people we have lost the way, I know in my heart that we have to go back to those if we are to survive as Anishnabe.

Those laws and those teachings are not for this person or for that person, they are for everybody. As a woman in my community my responsibility is the wellness of the community. So I can't begin to say these laws only apply to this one or to that one. That's not for me to say. It is for me to find out how I can help that person because he is way off track. Especially when the individuals start victimizing children, they are way off track. What are the things I have to do as a woman to bring these people back in balance so that they are not a threat to children and women in my community?

I also believe that the Creator is always there with us and presents us with situations. We have the ability and the skill to deal with these situations. Otherwise, the Creator wouldn't present us with them. It is for us to search within

ourselves, based on the laws and the teachings, and ask what are the things we have to do.

I think a lot of our people think that way. We are all family. It doesn't matter where we come from. We all have responsibilities for each other. We are affected by the systems and the laws of our white brothers, but our own should be the basis. We have to find ways to blend in with the mainstream, to interact with them in a healthy way so that we can not only keep a person out of jail for five months, but keep him out of jail by focusing on healing, so the person doesn't get back into that system again.

My basic philosophy is, no matter where or what, we as Anishnabe have responsibility for each other, and not only within our own little community, but right across the country. I think as a woman I have a role to play in that. It is at a larger scope, but traditionally the women were responsible for children, for the families, and for the wellness of their community. That philosophy is still there but, given the problems that we face today, my role as a woman has expanded to a larger scope. That's what guides me, women look after women; women look after children. It is my responsibility as a woman, my traditional role as a woman, to make sure that children are safe.

For me, we are faced with problems that we tend to block. It doesn't matter where you put a person, his wife and children are still over here and you can never break that bond regardless of how dysfunctional the family is. The Creator still gave those children to that man. So I can't just try and heal the children without working with the father and the mother.

Everything is connected. You can't separate it. You have to face the entire problem, not only pieces of it, and expect to deal with pieces of it thinking that everything is going to be okay.

I believe that's the way our whole team thinks and believes, but sometimes it gets really difficult. It doesn't matter what kind of problem we have, we can't expect anybody outside to fix it for us, we have to do it ourselves.

When I think of the social structures that were in place through the clan systems — looking after yourself, looking after your family and your community — I think that is what we have to do today. We are probably more at a disadvantage than

my parents were because they had the structures in place; today we don't, but we still have to find ways of bringing that structure back to the community.

I can't ever walk away from my philosophy. It reaches right across the country. I am from the Loon Clan. I was listening to this one Elder speak on TV, and he said, "Your relatives go across the country. When I go across the county I find people that belong to the Loon Clan. Those are my relatives." I was amazed how the clan system really ties people together.

Another thing that helped me understand the connection we have with Anishnabe people across this country, is when I talk about my problem to others in a circle. Then it is no longer mine alone. People that sit in a circle with me share that burden. It makes my burden that much lighter because people share it. I understood that in terms of myself as an individual within my community. Once I understood that concept it became very easy for me to talk about my problems in a circle because why carry the load yourself?

The Elder I was listening to said: "When you go to a community and you talk about sexual victimization, the burden of that problem is at that individual level where others are helping you carry your problem. You do it at the national level or international level because when you see someone having the strength to talk about what has happened to them, you are touching them and the problem becomes shared." I thought: "That's right on, that's what we need, that's what is going to help us move beyond."

I believe that sexual victimization is pretty bad in all of our communities. So if a person can go to this community and that community and begin to tell others that they can deal with this problem; this is how we have done it. We can give them the skills and the knowledge and the strength to do it. I think it is important to give them hope and tell them that, within our laws and our teachings, we can deal with this problem.

People say: "Why should I go to New Brunswick to talk about what Hollow Water does? Or, why do people come all the way from Saskatchewan? I never understood. But when that Elder talked about the sharing of the problem and the burden and how we give each other strength, then it made sense.

We had a woman, a defence lawyer who works on death row, hear us speak. She came up to us and she said, "Can I come to Hollow Water?" We said,

"Sure, you can come", not really thinking that she would, but she appeared over there within the next few days and she stayed for a week.

She talked about where she works in the prison, the death row. She works with people waiting to die. She talked about how she feels that these people need to get some things resolved before they go. She can never change the sentence. They are going to die. But at least she can help them by easing some of their pain, having them acknowledge what they have done, and take responsibility.

Now she comes every year. Death row is like the final chapter in how far we have moved away from healing and caring. She says, "I need to come up here at least once a year to be in a place where people are actually willing to forgive and willing to work with people that offend." I think about her often when we are struggling. I think of what she has to face. At least here we have a chance.

I think there is a need to prove yourself as a human being, not as someone that murdered or took somebody's life. How difficult it must be for a man waiting for the electric chair, or whatever they use these days. Have you heard of the concept of, when you do something wrong to someone else you are going to learn somehow, become aware of the pain that you have caused someone else because you are going to learn at a very personal level that what goes around comes around?

There was one agency who wanted to work with the concept that we developed in Hollow Water. They were so focused on just the child, saying, "We have to protect the child, and these are the things we can do — foster care, adoption, and other things." It just didn't feel right to take children from their families or their communities. I would always say, "We have to look at our ways, our values. We have to develop our own agency in that way."

I got tired of talking. Rather than trying to focus at a regional level, I stopped talking there and just went and did what I was talking about in my community. Now, after ten years, they are still practising child welfare in all those other communities the way it is practised in mainstream, but slowly, slowly it is coming around.

There is another area that I look at a lot. There have been books written on people dispossessed from their land base, and all the problems that arise out of that. When people are dispossessed from their land and their language, they

loose key connections. I was thinking about the laws and the teachings, how it is in our language. It is not spelled out like the ten commandments but they are very much a part of the everyday living. The language carries those laws. The term "*qi puch*" translates to "crazy", but when you take the two words, it is much harsher and has connotations of someone not totally connected. I look at our language and it is not a harsh language. It is a kind language. There is a lot of humour in it.

One is almost obligated to set that person right; to help and never to totally dismiss that person as having no value. When I think about the land and the language and the connections to the teachings and the laws, these people are also a part of it. We have been shown what happens to people when they are taken from their land, taken from their language. What happens to those people? Horrible things happen to people.

As a child care agency that's looking after wellness of children, people don't even stop to think what they do to them when they remove them from their families, remove them from their communities, put them in a totally strange environment with strange people and a new language that they can't speak. They are dispossessing them. The intention is to help them, but they don't understand the effects and how it totally destroys a person.

I talk to those issues all the time in the agency I work for. It is slowly starting to connect. Back home there are some families that say, "Take this child, put him over there, somewhere over there where he can be healed, because what they are doing here is not good." I can't do that because I know in my heart that what I am doing is dispossessing those children. It builds on the philosophy that we are faced with problems but there are also resources and help for us to deal with the problem.

Not too long ago I heard a lawyer who was working with a Native organization. He was at a conference where Elders were part of that conference. They spoke about the Treaties and what they mean. His comment was, "Yes, it is good to have that knowledge, but it doesn't apply today. Today you would have to have knowledge about the reality of today. You have to know how governments work, what the Charter of Rights is, and what the Constitution is". He talked on and on about what we should do; what we should know today, and how today is today and yesterday was yesterday. I sat and listened to him and after he spoke I said, "I disagree with you. I disagree totally because the problem is not with the

Elders. The Elders are right on. They have carried on the laws and the teachings. They know what the Treaties mean. They know how it applies today. The problem is with the younger generations that have been disconnected from the land, from the language, and from their families. Now all of a sudden they are coming up with ideas of how we should be as Anishnabe today." That is the problem. They are disconnected. They no longer have the foundation. They are over here floating around, getting lost in procedure and policies.

I went a few times to Stony Mountain Institution. I sat in circles with inmates. I think it was in that prison that I understood the concept that as a mother I am not only a mother to my children, I am a mother to all. That's when it really hit me because, in every one of those young men, I felt like a mother. I could imagine the pain of mothers, of their real mothers, their blood mothers, because I could feel it as a mother. I sat in the circle and I listened to those young men talk about traditions, about values, about how the jails are not part of our culture. There were good words, but they were spoken very aggressively. I heard anger and hate in those words. It really clashed. Those young men have the knowledge, however there is so much pain and anger in their bodies that it travels to their hearts. They had the drum there and they sang beautiful songs. I felt a lump in my throat the whole time I was there, but I felt at some level it was all wrong.

There are a lot of other things that we have come to recognize in our work. There was a time when people could be bashing each other around and that was okay, and we put up with that. My friend is a good example. In my community the sexuality is so messed up that there is no respect. The way that you related to men or women was at a sexual level. Even in the way that people talked there were sexual innuendoes to your speech since that was the only way to relate to each other.

My friend says when he started to heal, that was one of the things he had to change. We even had to change our way of talking to each other. We had to recognize that you don't talk badly, that's disrespect. We had to get to a point where it just did not feel right any more to talk that way, but the habit is sure hard to break.

It wasn't until my friend started feeling that it didn't feel right that he started to change the way that he talked. He knew at a mental level that respect means you don't talk that way to women, and respect for yourself means you don't talk

that way to women, but it was a hard habit to break. I still hear him once in a while. It was used in humour. Everybody laughed, but it was really degrading. It didn't even enter our minds that you are defaming the character of that person, the integrity of that person. Now he says, "Now it doesn't feel right to talk that way", but it was a real training for him.

As people, we are blueprints. We come out of a community with all these ugly habits — ways of talking and ways of connecting with each other totally on a sexual level. Now we are moving away from that, getting more in line with the laws and teachings, and the values of our people. It is really hard to apply those laws. It has all been really hard.

This is an edited transcript of an interview with Berma Bushie in November, 1996.